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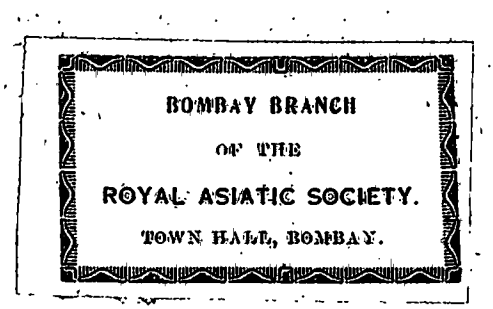

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SPEECHES

ON

PARLIAMENTARY REFORM.

LONDON
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PARLIAMENTARY REFORM.

A SERIES OF SPEECHES

ON THAT SUBJECT DELIVERED IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS BY

THE RIGHT HON. B. DISRAELI

(1848—1866).

REPRINTED (BY PERMISSION) FROM HANSARD'S DEBATES.

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EDITED BY

MONTAGU CORRY, B.A.

OF LINCOLN'S INN, BARRISTER-AT-LAW.

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LONDON:
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1867.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

These Speeches, commencing at a period even antecedent to the desertion of the principle of Finality by Lord John Russell, and ending with the last session, were made by a Member of Parliament who during the whole interval was either Leader of the Opposition or principal Minister of the Queen in the House of Commons.

They represent, therefore, the opinions of a Party, and there is the highest authority for stating that, with scarce exceptions, the views which they represent were, after due deliberation, adopted by every eminent man who has since sat in the councils of Lord Derby, and by every leading country gentleman of the time.

So long as the Whig party were firm in

upholding the settlement of 1832, the Tory party, though not insensible to some injustice in that measure, resolved to support its authors against all attempts at further change in the constitution of the House of Commons. But when the Whigs yielded their position, their political opponents determined to assert the principles which in their opinion should guide any future reconstruction, and which from that time have consequently been placed before the country in the following speeches, with an amplitude of knowledge and a vigour and versatility of argument and illustration, which have been universally acknowledged.

These speeches, then, form a complete and consistent record of the main opinions of a great party in the state during the important period in which a further change of the constitution of the House of Commons has been in agitation ; and the country will now be enabled to see with what justness it has been asserted, that the Tory party are disqualified from dealing with the most difficult of modern political questions, in consequence

of their constant and unvarying hostility to any attempt to improve our popular representation.

M. C.

LONDON: *January* 1867.

CONTENTS.

PAGE

SPEECH ON MR. HUME'S MOTION ON NATIONAL REPRESENTATION, 1848 1

SPEECH ON MR. LOCKE KING'S MOTION ON THE COUNTY FRANCHISE, 1850 32

SPEECH ON MR. LOCKE KING'S MOTION ON THE COUNTY FRANCHISE, 1851 42

SPEECH ON THE REFORM BILL, 1852 46

SPEECH ON MR. HUME'S MOTION ON NATIONAL REPRESENTATION, 1852 56

SPEECH ON MR. LOCKE KING'S MOTION ON THE COUNTY FRANCHISE, 1852 81

SPEECH ON INTRODUCING THE BILL FOR THE ASSIGNMENT OF SEATS FORFEITED BY THE DISFRANCHISEMENT OF SUDBURY AND ST. ALBANS, 1852 87

SPEECH ON LORD JOHN RUSSELL'S MOTION FOR THE POSTPONEMENT OF THE REFORM BILLS, 1854 114

PAGE

SPEECH ON LORD JOHN RUSSELL'S WITHDRAWAL OF THE REFORM BILLS, 1854 128

EXTRACT FROM A SPEECH ON THE POLICY OF THE GOVERNMENT OF LORD DERBY, 1858 142

SPEECH ON MR. LOCKE KING'S MOTION ON THE COUNTY FRANCHISE, 1858 148

SPEECH ON INTRODUCING THE REFORM BILL, 1859 . . . 157

SPEECH IN REPLY ON THE MOTION FOR THE INTRODUCTION OF THE REFORM BILL, 1859 211

SPEECH ON THE SECOND READING OF THE REFORM BILL, 1859 . 220

EXTRACT FROM A SPEECH ON LORD HARTINGTON'S AMENDMENT TO THE ADDRESS, 1859 258

SPEECH ON THE SECOND READING OF THE REFORM BILL, 1860 . 261

SPEECH ON GOING INTO COMMITTEE ON THE REFORM BILL, 1860. 289

SPEECH ON SIR JAMES FERGUSSON'S MOTION ON THE REFORM BILL, 1860 302

SPEECH ON THE WITHDRAWAL OF THE REFORM BILL, 1860 . 313

SPEECH ON MR. LOCKE KING'S MOTION ON THE COUNTY FRANCHISE, 1861 320

SPEECH ON THE SECOND READING OF MR. LOCKE KING'S COUNTY FRANCHISE BILL, 1861 327

SPEECH ON MR. BAINES'S BOROUGH FRANCHISE BILL, 1865 . . 336

SPEECH ON THE SECOND READING OF THE REFORM BILL, 1866 . 356

PAGE

SPEECH ON THE SECOND READING OF THE RE-DISTRIBUTION OF SEATS' BILL, 1866 412

SPEECH ON CAPTAIN HAYTER'S AMENDMENT ON GOING INTO COMMITTEE ON THE REFORM BILL, 1866 450

SPEECH ON MR. WALPOLE'S AMENDMENT IN COMMITTEE ON THE REFORM BILL, 1866 469

SPEECHES

ON

PARLIAMENTARY REFORM.

JUNE 20, 1848.

On Mr. Hume's Motion, 'That this House, as at present constituted, does not fairly represent the population, the property, or the industry of the country, whence has arisen great and increasing discontent in the minds of a large portion of the people; and it is therefore expedient, with a view to amend the national representation, that the elective franchise shall be so extended as to include all householders; that votes shall be taken by ballot; that the duration of Parliaments shall not exceed three years, and that the apportionment of Members to population shall be made more equal.'

MR. HENRY DRUMMOND and LORD JOHN RUSSELL spoke against, and MR. W. J. FOX in favour of the Motion.

Mr. DISRAELI: Sir, the best answer to the animated address of the hon. Gentleman (Mr. Fox) is the resolution of the Member for Montrose. The hon. Gentleman has avowed himself to-night the advocate of those whom he describes as serfs. But I cannot find in the resolution of the hon. Member for Montrose that he is prepared to enfranchise those serfs. The speech of the hon. Gentleman refers to a class of men the circumstances of whose lives, as he describes them, are, in my opinion, extremely imaginary. But whether they are real, or whether they are imaginary, no one can suppose

for a moment that the project of the hon. Member for Montrose is one that at all provides the means of alleviating or of elevating their condition in the social or political scale. Whatever may be the prejudices of the hon. Gentleman against the 10*l.* elector, the proposition of the hon. Member for Montrose is not one that will enfranchise poets sleeping under hedges. That is not the proposition of the hon. Gentleman. And however comprehensive may be the sympathies of the hon. Member for Oldham (Mr. Fox), I cannot understand how, entertaining those opinions, and animated by those feelings, he can find it his duty to take so prominent a part in this debate—I mean as to the moment he has risen in it: how, with those opinions, he can avow himself the friend of a project, which would seem rather to increase the difficulties of those classes whose interests he advocates, by raising up barriers to their hopes, and which marks them out as unworthy of the new privileges which are to be accorded. With respect to the proposition itself, or similar ones, the Gentlemen who sit upon this side of the House are in a very different position from that of the hon. Gentleman and his supporters, or the Members of Her Majesty's Government. It is not for us, Sir, either to defend or attack the Reform Act. We obey it. When it was first brought forward, it encountered the criticism of those who were opposed to His Majesty's Ministers in 1832. Perhaps it benefited in some degree by that opposition. But when it had passed—when it became the law of the country—it received from us that allegiance which the law in this country always commands; and no doubt the remedial and practical sense of this country has prevented some of those evils which were then anticipated.

But, Sir, when I say that we neither defend nor attack the Reform Act, I cannot myself believe that in an age like the present, when a Motion like that of the hon. Member for Montrose is brought forward, it is consistent with our duty—with the position we occupy with regard to our constituents and the country—and as the representatives of the party who originally were the opponents of the change of 1832—I do not think it is consistent with our duty that we should evade the difficulties of this debate; and some there are who think it is one not unfruitful of difficulty. Therefore I wish to take this opportunity, if the House will allow me, and at this hour, with as much brevity as I can command, to make some observations on the project which has been brought forward with so much preparation—which has been so sedulously prepared, but the true character of which I believe is not yet accurately appreciated, and which certainly seems not to be understood by the eloquent advocate we have just heard, who is prepared to enfranchise imaginary serfs and popular poets. Now, Sir, the hon. Gentleman towards the close of his address told us that he was the advocate of fiscal reform. The hon. Gentleman who introduced this project dwelt but slightly on that topic. Yet I have watched with attention, and read with an observation of no careless character, the proceedings that have been conducted by the hon. Gentleman and by his friends at the meetings they have called, and the resolutions they have offered for the consideration of those assembled: and I have always found that, on every occasion, financial and fiscal reform has been most sedulously brought forward, and that the principal plea for Parliamentary reconstruction and political revolution has always been the increase in

the expenditure and taxation of the country under the system that exists; and I had occasion this afternoon to listen to a great number of petitions that were presented, and I found the same tone pervade the whole of them. The same echo had been caught by all: they all assumed the increased expenditure of the Government, and the enormous amount of taxation of the country; and these were the causes—these the pleas—at the popular meetings, in the popular resolutions, and the popular speeches, of the hon. Gentleman and the new party, that were brought forward as the basis and principal reason for political changes. I want to know what is the reason that to-night we have heard so little of fiscal and financial reform.

Now, Sir, I can easily understand why the hon. Gentleman who has just addressed the House did not dwell on that subject. The hon. Gentleman is a master of statistics, but of statistics of a different kind from those we are accustomed to in this House—very important, very interesting, no doubt—the amount of penny publications, the great increase in cheap literature, the developement of railway intellect, and of all those productions you may find at the terminus or the station—circumstances in the age highly deserving of consideration, and which would not escape the observation of any sensible man. Still, these are not the statistics that touch the question of fiscal and financial reform, of which we have heard so much, and which are the real pleas, and were the popular pleas, of this movement and this new party, and which I wish to see clearly placed before the House, and before those measures for which they were the pleas are brought under our consideration. Now, Sir, I reserve to myself—

with the permission of the House, and with as much brevity as I can command—I reserve to myself the right of giving my opinion upon these measures, whatever I may think of the fallacy or truth of those pleas. But I think the House will agree with me, that after all England has for months been told, that there has been in this country an enormous increase of taxation, and an enormous increase in the expenditure of the Government – told this, too, at a period of general suffering and general disturbance—told to the people of this country in order to impress upon them that there ought, as there had been changes in other countries, to be a change here, in consequence of our oppressive taxation and the injurious expenditure of our Government—it is of some importance that, in a debate like the present, this House and the country should clearly understand whether those pleas are true or not. I give the hon. Member for Montrose and his friends the benefit of this full admission, that whether those pleas be true or not—however those circumstances may affect the position of himself and his friends in this controversy—they are circumstances which do not affect the abstract excellence or necessity of his measures.

Now, Sir, one word, then, as to the enormous increase of taxation in this country, which is the principal reason for a change in our Parliamentary constitution. I shall not at midnight refer, except by memory, to any documents; but the facts to which I refer are so well authenticated that I speak in the presence of many who, in a moment, can confute me if I make any great mistake. I take the period of twenty years ago—a little prior to the passing of the Reform Bill. The revenue that was raised in this

country, in 1828, from our ordinary sources, was forty-nine and a half millions in round numbers. The same revenue raised in 1848—that is, twenty years afterwards—was forty-seven and a half millions. How is it possible, then, that the hon. Gentleman can maintain the position that taxation in this country has oppressively increased? But the revenue of 1828 was not only two millions greater from our ordinary sources—of course I omit the Income-tax, which does not touch the working classes—than the revenue raised in 1848, but the revenue in 1828 was raised from a population, in round numbers, of less than twenty-three millions, while the same revenue in 1848 was raised from a population of thirty millions. Why, Sir, if you only calculate per head the burden of taxation of these two periods, you will find, I think, that in 1828 the people of England were taxed something like 2*l.* 3*s.* 2*d.* a head; and, in 1848, 1*l.* 12*s.* 2*d.* These figures measure the difference of the proportion borne by the annual taxation imposed by the State to the general fund out of which it is paid; and this on the assumption that the annual wealth of the country has increased in a ratio equal to the population. But we all know, and no man can be ignorant of it, for the documents are upstairs, that the annual wealth of the country has increased in a greater ratio than the population. Well then, Sir, what becomes of the plea for political change founded on an oppressive increase of taxation under the existing system? But it is not only true that taxation per head in this country in 1848, as compared with twenty years ago, has been considerably reduced in amount, but there is another circumstance of deep importance which ought never to be forgotten—that there has been a great redistribution of taxation

—that the amount raised has been redistributed—and in every instance the alteration has been effected in favour of the working classes of this country. Sir, I have a return here, but I think I can trust my memory as to its results. The Customs for the years 1827 and 1847—which two years were the financial years of 1828 and 1848—the Customs of 1827 amounted to 18,000,000*l.*, and they barely exceeded 18,000,000*l.* in 1847. The Excise was 18,500,000*l.* in 1827, and it was less than 12,000,000*l.* in 1847. The Stamps and Taxes are the same in both years; but in the Post Office, there has been a vast change and an immense reduction in favour of those classes who were suffering from fiscal oppression; so that, between the two periods of 1847 and 1827, there has been a redistribution of taxation to the amount of more than seven millions in favour of the working classes, to say nothing of the diminished burthen of the amount arising from the great increase in population, in commerce, and in national wealth.

Now, Sir, I mention these facts—I think I heard somebody cry 'Question!'—these are certainly not details very agreeable at past midnight; but, after all, it is the business of the case. We are told that in this country there is a system of such oppressive taxation, and of Government expenditure so enormous and increasing, that it is necessary to have reform. I do not say it is not necessary to have reform. I will enter fairly into that question. But do not let us enter upon that great question upon false pretences. The rate of our Government expenditure during the last twenty years, notwithstanding the vast increase in our population and wealth, has been almost stationary. The amount of taxation has been stationary. Well,

then, the pleas for reform on these grounds are not true. The pleas that have been to-night repeated *ad nauseam* in every petition, are utterly fallacious and false. Now, Sir, I again admit, however those pleas may affect the character of those who urge them, they do not affect the nature of the measures proposed. Let us examine those measures. We are asked, in the first place, to increase the suffrage. I listened with great attention to the hon. Member for Montrose, and I certainly expected to hear from the hon. Gentleman some principle laid down upon which the franchise was to be extended, and that in asking us to consent to a great change—as far as the present argument, I am not now denying that a change may be necessary, that point I am perfectly prepared to enter into—but I say the hon. Gentleman who proposes the change, ought to lay down some principle on which that change shall be founded. The hon. Gentleman, as far as I could gather, laid down the principle that an Englishman had a right to a vote. That really was the point of his speech. He talked afterwards of not confounding constitutional rights with the rights of man; but he did not condescend to show what the difference between constitutional rights and the rights of man might be, but he said that every subject of the Queen had a right to a vote. I want to know, if an Englishman has a right to vote, why is it necessary that he should have a qualification for that vote—why that qualification should be the circumstance of living in a house? The hon. Gentleman also says every man should be of twenty-one years of age before he attains the right to vote—that the Constitution confers on him this right in return for the obedience which he renders to the laws; and, as an illustration of this obedience, he cites the case of a man who, at the age

of eighteen or sixteen, may be draughted for the militia. But I want to know how the hon. Gentleman's illustration agrees with his principle, and why, according to that principle, a man who is to be summoned for the militia should not also be entitled to vote at the age of eighteen. The hon. Gentleman talks of legal age. What has legal age to do with the working classes? And what has legal age to do with any class in the country? The commander of the escort of guards to Her Most Gracious Majesty may be, and often is, not more than eighteen years of age. The hon. Gentleman has properly reminded us that every man is bound to serve in the militia before he is of legal age; and, I believe, even school-boys must join the *posse comitatus*.

Well: bear in mind that the hon. Gentleman, in proposing this great change, has laid down no principle whatever. I myself cannot understand, if you assume an abstract right to a vote, where the line can be drawn. I observe that, in a debate that recently took place, not only in another place but in another country, on the suffrage, some ridicule was occasioned by a gentleman advocating the rights of the other sex to the suffrage; but, as far as mere abstract reason is concerned, I should like to see anybody in this House, who is a follower of the hon. Gentleman, get up and oppose that claim. I say that in a country governed by a woman—where you allow women to form part of the other estate of the realm—Peeresses in their own right, for example—where you allow a woman not only to hold land, but to be a lady of the manor and hold legal courts,—where a woman by law may be churchwarden and overseer of the poor—I do not see, where she has so much to do with State and Church, on what reasons, if you come to right, she has not a right to vote. All this

proves that right has nothing to do with the matter: the very plan of the hon. Gentleman is a plan that at once disfranchises millions, even of those adult males of which we have heard so much. Other Gentlemen have stated that the suffrage is a trust. I do not wish to take refuge in that very vague and somewhat canting phrase. I do not look upon the suffrage as a trust any more than a right. It is what everything in England is—a privilege. It is created by law, as everything in England is created; and the characteristic of our society has been that it has always held out privilege, not as an odious exception, but as a general reward. This brings us to the real character of this House, and the political order of which we are the representatives. We represent the Commons; the Commons are an estate of the realm. The materials of that estate constitute, of course, a question of policy—of expediency—and it is perfectly open to anybody, at any time, to discuss the question of what that order should consist. It is an order, whether you make it consist of thousands, of hundreds of thousands, or even of two or three millions —it becomes an order and a privileged order; and for the hon. Gentleman to pretend that he is settling a great question for ever by proposing that every man who lives in a house should have a vote is an absurdity, because the very supporter of the Motion, on his own side, who has made an eloquent speech in favour of it, has argued throughout that there should be no limitation whatever assigned to the exercise of the suffrage.

I ventured to say before, that Gentlemen around me are not responsible for the Reform Act. But the Reform Act was a reconstruction of the order of the Commons—of our estate of the realm. It was a settlement most unsatisfactory to us—we offered our

objections to it, and got pelted for our pains. But no one can pretend that settlement was not carried with the full support and sanction of the people of England; and if the question of its passing had been submitted to universal suffrage, there is not the slightest doubt that at the moment all would have registered their votes for the Bill. No other plan was desired or tolerated. It was to be something neither more or less. What you wanted was not only the Bill, but the whole Bill, and nothing but the Bill—and you got it. You were told at the time that the first critics of the Reform Bill would be the Reformers themselves; and no prophecy ever was more strikingly fulfilled. But when there has been a settlement of a great question—concluded, too, under such circumstances—the country agitated for two years —yourselves choosing the hour of action—when you had every possible advantage—when opposition, legitimate, constitutional, and I believe national opposition, was entirely overcome by the energy and artifices of your triumphant faction—when you yourselves laid it down as a great apothegm that became a household word, that you would have it and nothing else—is it unreasonable that we, who agreed to it with reluctance, or that the Whig party, the Government of the day, who brought it forward after mature consideration, should say before we disturb the settlement then made —'Let us be sure that we are arriving at a new reconstruction that offers a fair prospect of giving satisfaction to the people and security to the State'? I speak, not from egotism, for myself on this subject; for one naturally wishes, on such subjects, not to draw any one into responsibility for one's expressions. I, for one, am no advocate of finality. I conceive there may be circumstances—there may be a period, when we shall do that

which we have done for five hundred years in this country—reconstruct the estate of the Commons. But I contend that the last reconstruction—and it is rather a recent one, however unsatisfactory to the hon. Gentleman and his Friends—is likely to be more satisfactory to the nation than the plan brought forward by the hon. Gentleman; and I am not prepared to support any new plan, any new change, on a subject so important, unless I believe it to be one that will conduce very greatly to the public interest. Certainly, I cannot, in the character of the present plan, discover anything that has a tendency to satisfy the public heart; because you must divest this question of all that rhetorical varnish and that powerful sentiment with which it has been suffused by the hon. Member for Oldham. This is not at all a project to enfranchise the serfs of England —this is not at all a project that tells the labouring classes they shall take their place in the political constitution of the country. It is characterised by features totally opposed to the principles laid down by the hon. Member for Oldham. If there be any mistake more striking than another in the settlement of 1832—and, in this respect, I differ from the hon. Member for Surrey —it is, in my opinion, that the Bill of 1832 took the qualification of property in too hard and rigid a sense, as the only qualification which should exist in this country for the exercise of political rights. How does the hon. Member for Montrose, the great champion of the new movement, meet this difficulty? He has brought forward a project of which property, and property alone, is the basis: he has not come forward with any scheme for an educational suffrage or an industrial suffrage—he has not attempted in any way to increase or vary the elements of suffrage. It is

impossible that any plan can be more hard, more commonplace, more literal, more unsatisfactory, or more offensive, as the speech of the hon. Member for Oldham shows it must be, to the great body of the working classes than one which recognises property, and property alone, as its basis.

Now, Sir, for one, I think property is sufficiently represented in this House. I am prepared to support the system of 1832 until I see that the circumstances and necessities of the country require a change; but I am convinced that when that change comes, it will be one that will have more regard for other sentiments, qualities, and conditions, than the mere possession of property as a qualification for the exercise of the political franchise. And, therefore, in opposing the measure of the hon. Member for Montrose, I protest against being placed in the category of finality, or as one who believes that no change is ever to take place in that wherein there has been, throughout the history of this ancient country, frequent and continuous change —the construction of this estate of the realm. I oppose this new scheme, because it does not appear to be adapted in any way to satisfy the wants of the age, or to be conceived in the spirit of our times.

I shall touch, on this occasion, but very briefly on the second point of the scheme—the ballot, which we shall have another opportunity of fully discussing. There cannot be the slightest doubt that, if you adopt this new mode of registering suffrages, you at once effect a very great alteration in the character and habits of the people. That I think a very great evil; unless called for by strong necessity: that, alone, is a strong objection to the change. I do not dwell on the practical considerations with respect to this subject, that if we

adopted the ballot, we probably should not avoid the corruption and intimidation we deprecate. I will not dwell on the experience of the ancient past, or that experience which, on the other side of the Atlantic, is perpetually accruing to us. But, both with respect to the right and the manner of voting—the suffrage and the ballot—I am surprised that hon. Gentlemen opposite perpetually forget an immense element which, in the discussion of this question, ought never to be omitted, and that is the influence of opinion organised by a free press. That is the best safeguard against corruption and intimidation. You may pass what laws you like; but the ultimate means by which intimidation and corruption will be repressed is by elevating the tone of public feeling, and bringing the influence of public opinion, through the press, to bear upon the conduct of the great body of the nation. It is all folly and nonsense to say that the present age and the present Parliament are distinguished by their corrupt practices. The very reverse is the fact. All Parliaments for the last fifty years have become less and less corrupt. But it is not your laws that have made them so, so much as the increasing action of public opinion; for, even when you have passed stringent laws, you only did so when they were called for by public opinion, which desired to be expressed in the shape of a legislative enactment. Why, before the American war—a period not yet very remote—the Secretary of the Treasury used to sit at the gangway—just where the hon. Member for Devonport * is now accustomed to sit—and at a stated period of the Session, the end or the beginning, gave, in the House, to the Members who supported Government, a

* The late Right Hon. Henry Tufnell, then Secretary of the Treasury.

routine *douceur* of a 500*l.* note; which was as little looked upon as bribery as head-money by a freeman. [A VOICE: 'Walpole.'] No, no; much later than Walpole, and quite distinct from secret bribery. It was a practice which the manners of the age and the low tone of public feeling permitted. So, you see how frivolous and unfounded are those reiterated assertions that this House is daily more corrupt, and is growing more and more so every day. The fact is, that it is becoming purer and more pure every day—inevitable in a land of progress like England, where, with a free press and a healthy action of public opinion, the undue influence of gold and property must every year and each successive Parliament be diminished.

On the third point, that of triennial Parliaments, I will touch only for a moment. Nobody will venture to maintain that the increase of taxation or the extravagant expenditure of the Government has been in any practical degree occasioned by long Parliaments. Hon. Members are well aware that, during the last twenty years, we have had on an average Parliaments of about that duration which the hon. Member for Montrose advocates. I am the less inclined to say anything against triennial Parliaments, because they are part of those old Tory principles which I have ever taken every opportunity of promulgating. Are they not? Did not Sir William Wyndham advocate triennial Parliaments against a corrupt Minister? They are a portion of that old Tory creed around which, I am happy to observe more than one indication, the people of this country are well inclined to rally. The only objection to the change is that it is a change, and that in the present position of affairs all unnecessary changes of this kind are to be deprecated. If I found triennial Parliaments

established, I would support and retain them. But I can hardly think that any sensible man can believe that Parliaments having legally that tenure of existence, which they now possess virtually, could affect the course of our policy and legislation.

I now come to the fourth point, which is one of considerable importance—that of electoral districts. The hon. Member for Montrose entered into some details on the matter, of which I was not myself ignorant, owing to the courtesy of a Gentleman who, I regret to say, is no longer a Member of this House. I have here the manifesto of the new party on this subject. Sir Joshua Walmisley, in the most obliging manner, placed in my hand this pamphlet; as the acknowledged manifesto of the new party. Giving me credit for that candid disposition which I hope I possess, he concluded that, after reading this important and elaborate document, I should be unable to resist the force of its arguments and its statements. I promised to give the work my most attentive consideration, and I have done so. I should have been happy to have expressed my opinion of the scheme in the public presence of that Gentleman, and thus apprised him of the result of my perusal; but unfortunately that Gentleman, who was sent here to ensure the future purity of Parliament, has from peculiar circumstances of a contrary character, no longer a seat amongst us.* The hon. Member for Montrose, in speaking on this part of the question, rather beat about the bush—he fought somewhat shy of it. He first went into statistical calculations; but then he shuffled out of them, and altogether there was a confusion about his statement which showed the hand of a master in

* Sir Joshua Walmisley, M.P. for Leicester, had just been unseated for bribery.

political mystification, who knows how to drape with elegance the naked truth, and when to reserve his revelations. He did not commit himself very positively to any particular view; but I have the accredited manifesto of the party here, and will take leave to call the attention of the House to it, as I think it is calculated to throw more light on the subject than the hon. Member seemed disposed to impart to it. The principle laid down in this document is what the hon. Gentleman only hinted at—namely, that the representation of England should be founded on population. [Mr. HUME made a remark.] Exactly: population, as showing the amount of property.

I will show you how that principle works, and you can then decide as to the expediency of the practice. I must myself confess a little mortification on this subject, when the late Member for Leicester called my attention to the county of Buckingham. The county of Buckingham is here set down at a certain rated rental, and a comparison is then sought to be instituted on that head between it and Lancashire. At present Buckinghamshire has eleven Members; but, under the new system, it is to have only four. Now, I am content to take Buckinghamshire to illustrate my views. It is true that the county of Buckingham has a rated rental to the annual value only of 684,000*l.*, and that the annual value of the rated property in Lancashire is about five millions, and it only has twenty-six Members. I admit that Buckinghamshire has none of those great towns which we are told for the future are to govern England. But the county of Buckingham first refused to pay ship-money, the county of Buckingham carried the Grand Remonstrance; and ever since the settlement of our Parliamentary constitution in 1640, of which it was one

of the main creators, the county of Buckingham has supplied this House with a series of statesmen than whom no body of men have more contributed to create the empire, sustain the renown, and cherish the high spirit of the English people. You may smile, remembering only the uninfluential person who now addresses you; but I was thinking of those days when the county of Buckingham gave to the House of Commons Mr. Hampden and the Grenvilles, the elder Pitt and Mr. Burke. Why, even at the last reconstruction of this estate of the realm, it was the county of Buckingham that occasioned the enfranchisement of the most numerous class of the new constituency, and not the least reputable.* And is it, Sir, to be tolerated that a population which for centuries has been born and bred in the memory and fulfilment of such great deeds as these, should be deprived of their hereditary weight in that free Parliament of which they were themselves among the first originators, because, if told by the head, they may not be equal to the numbers of some great town born in a day, and destined perhaps to vanish in a day? I hear a great deal in the present day about realised capital; but surely, Sir, one of the most important elements in constructing the franchise of an ancient people is the realised experience of a nation. To say that you will, by a stroke of the pen, suddenly deprive of their political position a population which has so worthily exercised its rights, is not only to say that you will bring about a revolution, but very possibly produce a civil war. But how is the new scheme to act? Now, according to the accredited manifesto of the new party!—['No, no!']—O! political ingratitude, thou

* Alluding to 'The Chandos Clause,' proposed by the Marquis of Chandos, M.P. for Bucks.

art indeed a proverb! I would appeal to the spirit of the defunct Member for Leicester. [Mr. HUME made a remark to the effect that the pamphlet referred to had been printed before the party was formed.] Oh! then, it was the origin of your party! Here it is—a most important document—drawn up by Alexander Mackay, Esq., of the Middle Temple, Barrister-at-Law. Now, let us see how Manchester is to be represented under the new constitution. Manchester is not so scurvily treated as the county of Buckingham. Under the new constitution, Manchester is to have for Members—how many think you? Seven! Only think of seven Members for Manchester! Why, Sir, from peculiar circumstances, since the days of our dreary opposition, Manchester has virtually, as far as debate is concerned, only had one Member in this House; * and, Sir, as far as I am concerned, I must acknowledge it has been found quite difficult enough to keep him in order. But, Sir, if we are to have seven Members for Manchester—if there are to be seven *Richards* in the field—if it is to be expected that we are to reply to each of them, night after night, and one after another —I at once, anxious as I am to assist and co-operate with my friends, must plainly say that I shall retire from the arena. The energies necessary for such a contest would be colossal—worthy of the giants of the old days of Parliamentary strife—the Pitts and the Foxes. But we are not only to have seven Members for Manchester, but Liverpool and Glasgow are each to have the same number. Conceive Liverpool and

* The Members for Manchester were Mr. Milner Gibson and Mr. Bright. The former gentleman had then accepted office as Vice-President of the Board of Trade, which entailed silence in debate.

Glasgow each with seven Members, and all, of course, statistical Members! * Dublin is to have six Members; and, as we always have a petition against the return of a Member for Dublin, and some of our best men—my noble Friend, the Member for Stamford (the Marquis of Granby) among them—are now working on a Dublin Committee, there will, of course, be six Dublin Committees all working at the same time. Then, Birmingham and Leeds are to have each five Members, and Bristol and Sheffield only four. London is to be represented by forty. The new constitution distinctly lays it down that London is entitled to as many Members as the whole of the kingdom of Scotland, on the grounds of population and wealth. The only objection to the new scheme is, that when we have got the men together, the seven Members for Manchester, the seven Members for Glasgow, the forty Members for London, and their comrades, we may certainly have something called a House of Commons; but then, unfortunately, this House of Commons will probably be able neither to govern the country nor themselves. It is easy to form these plans. You may go the full tether of the hon. Member for Oldham, and have universal suffrage at once—for that is the length to which he goes. We have sufficient experience to know—recent experience—that in a country, however civilised, however powerful, however enlightened, they may elect their representatives by universal suffrage, and yet, when they are elected, the country may laugh in their face. That will happen in our national assembly which has happened in the national assembly of a neighbouring country. Sir, as it is the fashion to lay down principles, I say at once that neither in this,

* Mr. Macgregor was Member for Glasgow; a great statistician, but not very popular as a speaker.

nor in any other ancient European country, can there be any such thing as government, which is not based upon traditionary influences, and large properties round which men may rally. They are the only security for liberty and property. The Manchester school are always attacking traditionary influences, and intimating that it is their wish to subdivide large properties. Foreseeing, as I do, what the results will be, and convinced that, without traditional influences and large properties, you will find it impossible to govern England, I prefer the liberty we now enjoy to the liberalism they promise, and find something better than the rights of men in the rights of Englishmen.

I have now shown the House, more briefly than I could have wished, the fallacy of the pleas on which the measures proposed to-night are brought forward. I have also offered some suggestions to the House, though necessarily much curtailed, which may perhaps make them hesitate before they will agree that the measures themselves are worthy of their confidence and support. I now briefly, because the hour is very late, will endeavour to show what is the real cause of these measures being brought forward, who bring them forward, and what may be the consequences of their adoption. Notwithstanding all the efforts of the hon. Members for Oldham and Montrose to veneer and varnish their scheme, and however dexterously they may have arranged their concessions, this is a middle-class movement—it is nothing more nor less than an attempt to aggrandize the power of that body of persons who have frankly told us that this is a middle-class Government, and, therefore, that they will take care of their own interests and their own objects. The House will not forget what that class has done in its legislative

enterprises. I do not use the term 'middle-class' with any disrespect; no one more than myself estimates what the urban population has done for the liberty and civilisation of mankind; but I speak of the middle-class as of one which avowedly aims at predominance; and therefore it is expedient to ascertain how far the fact justifies a confidence in their political capacity. It was only at the end of the last century that the middle-class rose into any considerable influence, chiefly through Mr. Pitt—that Minister whom they are always abusing. The first great movement in which they succeeded, showing their power over the people out of doors, independent of Parliament, was the abolition of the slave trade—a noble and sublime act—but carried with an entire ignorance of the subject, as the event has proved. How far it has aggravated the horrors of slavery, I stop not now to inquire. I make only one observation upon it with reference to the present subject of debate. The middle class emancipated the negroes; but they never proposed a Ten Hours Bill. So much for that move. The interests of the working classes of England were not much considered in that arrangement. Having tried their hand at colonial reform, by which, without diminishing the horrors of slavery, they succeeded in ruining our colonies—they next turned their hands to Parliamentary reform, and carried the Reform Bill. But observe, in that operation they destroyed, under the pretence of its corrupt exercise, the old industrial franchise, and they never constructed a new one. So much for the interests of the people in their second great legislative enterprise. So that, whether we look to their colonial reform or their Parliamentary reform, they entirely neglected the industrial classes. Having failed in colonial as well as

in Parliamentary reform—and I need not show how completely they have failed in Parliamentary reform, for the debate of this night is the perfect proof of that fact—they next tried commercial reform, and introduced free imports under the specious name of free trade. How were the interests of the working classes considered in this third movement? More than they were in their colonial or their Parliamentary reform? On the contrary, while the interests of capital were unblushingly advocated, the displaced labour of the country was offered neither consolation nor compensation; but was told that it must submit to be absorbed in the mass. In their colonial, Parliamentary, and commercial reforms, there is no evidence of any sympathy with the working classes; and every one of the measures so forced upon the country has, at the same time, proved disastrous. Their colonial reform ruined the colonies and increased slavery. Their parliamentary reform, according to their own account, was a delusion which has filled the people with disappointment and disgust. If their commercial reform have not proved ruinous, then the picture that has been presented to us of the condition of England every day for the last four or five months must be a gross misrepresentation. In this state of affairs, as a remedy for half a century of failure, we are under their auspices to take refuge in financial reform, which I predict will prove their fourth failure, and one in which the interests of the working classes will be as little considered and accomplished.

The principle of their financial reform is to throw the burthen of taxation on what is called realised property, which they pretend is of a more aristocratic character than other property. Upon a former occasion I took the opportunity of showing the fallacy of this position.

I reminded the House, that if the rental of England were equally divided among its proprietors, the average income of the holders of real property in Great Britain is only 170*l.* a year; and as there are many possessing more, so there must be many who have less. Then, with respect to another great branch of realised property—funded property—I also reminded the House that there are issued as many as fifty thousand dividend warrants for sums less than 5*l.* With regard to house property, I presume there is scarcely any Gentleman present who will doubt that the elements of that species of property must be not less democratic than those of landed and funded estates. Now, suppose a Chancellor of the Exchequer—and it would be a great feat—could transfer 10 per cent. of our taxation from the multitude to what is called realised property—suppose, on the one hundred millions per annum that realised property produces, he could transfer even 20 per cent., what relief would this afford to a people suffering from the want of work and wages? How far would it tend to increase that want of work and wages? I say nothing of the justice of the arrangements, or the equitable contrivance of relieving large commercial capitals from all imposts to the State. I feel warranted in saying that their financial reform will end in the same failure that has attended all other attempts at reform.

There is one more point to which I must advert before I sit down, and that is the source from which this movement springs. The noble Lord has expressed his belief that this is not a popular movement—that it has not a great array of supporters out of doors; but then the hon. Gentleman the Member for Montrose tells us to look at the petitions. But he assures us, at the same time, that they are all the consequences of

a declaration made by the noble Lord that the people of England did not require this reform. Up to that point the Member for Montrose admits that the people had been silent. Surely, the people of this country are not accustomed to wait to express their opinion, till it may chance to be elicited by some captious expression of a Minister of the Crown. The hon. Member for Montrose, in this respect, proves a little too much. It would have been more frank and instructive if he had told us how these petitions and these movements are managed. I must do it for him. In consequence of the organisation and agitation of the middle-class that has gone on of late years, a new profession has arisen in this country. An hon. Gentleman the other night said that diplomacy was going out of fashion. Possibly: there are people who think lawyers useless, and make their own wills; there are others who think doctors good for nothing, and take quack medicines; and there may be Ministers of State who think that they can dispense with the services of ambassadors and envoys. But those who are interested in finding employment for the rising generation need not be alarmed—a new profession has been discovered which will supply the place of the obsolete ones. It is a profession which requires many votaries—chairmen, deputy-chairmen; secretaries, committee-men, missionaries, pamphleteers, lecturers, hired orators—

> Rhetor, grammaticus, geometres, pictor, aliptes,
> Augur, schenobates, medicus, magus.

The business of this profession is to discover or invent great questions. When a great question is settled, it is the ruin of the profession. There is no need for a chairman, for there is no chair to fill—no want of

a deputy-chairman to represent his hon. Friend—there are no committees to be attended—no pamphlets to be written—the lecturer is idle, and the orator is dumb. The rule, however, is, when a great question has been settled, immediately to look out for a new one; yet to find a new great question is often the most difficult thing in the world. The profession like a new great question to loom in the distance before the old one is quite safe in port. Unfortunately for the profession, the right hon. Member for Tamworth at one stroke suddenly curtailed their last labours. After the great question of free imports, which they call free trade, was carried, the profession were at fault: they were flushed with triumph, but hungry for new prey. The hon. Member for the West Riding (Mr. Cobden), like a wise man, left them in the lurch and went abroad. Unfortunately for him, he returned a little too soon. However, he brought back a great question with him; and the profession were beginning to work perpetual peace when unfortunately occurred a state of general war. It was a terrible mistake: however, the hon. Member for the West Riding is a man of real talents, and he will get over it—in time. It was impossible to proceed with the perpetual peace plan after the unhappy affair at Paris—so it was shelved; and then this fortunate pamphlet happened to turn up. Electoral districts was a new cry, and served to flavour the somewhat stale pretexts of triennial Parliaments and vote by ballot. People who live in the country know little of what is going on except from the newspapers; and, seeing accounts of the public meetings that have been going forward, they have naturally thought there must be something rotten in the State; but I can assure them the matter is managed with the utmost caution and

finesse—like delicate artists they feel their way. Popular enthusiasm requires some cultivation. I will show you, on the authority of the journal that is the avowed organ of the 'New Movement,' how dexterously and with how much prudence a national demonstration is cockered up:—

REFORM MOVEMENT.

The New League Movement in Manchester.

It is well known that the Anti-Corn-Law League Rooms in Manchester have been occupied, since the dissolution of that body, as the place of occasional meeting for most of the gentlemen who took part in the great Anti-Corn-Law struggle.

Why, did we not always hear that the great Anti-Corn-Law League was entirely confined to that single object? But it seems that after their success they have been meeting there ever since—not knowing what to do.

Newall's Buildings—the *locus in quo*—have already become memorable, and their site will, in future days, be traced with scrupulous fidelity by the local historians. Their celebrity promises to be heightened by fresh movements for popular freedom by the men who contended for and gained commercial liberty. A gathering of some ten or a dozen of the old batch of free-traders took place there, as we have already stated, on Thursday evening; and amongst those who took part in the proceedings were Mr. Cobden, Mr. Bright, Mr. Kershaw, and Mr. J. B. Smith. Mr. George Wilson, chairman of the Anti-Corn-Law League, presided on the occasion. The meeting was private, and the proceedings, of course, preliminary; but strong opinions were expressed in favour of household suffrage, vote by ballot, triennial Parliaments, and equal electoral districts. It was ultimately agreed that a circular, signed by the chairman, should be forwarded to all the supporters of the free-trade movement, and that when public opinion should have been obtained on the points under discussion, a more decided measure be taken for appealing to the people at large.

The circular adopted on this occasion was as follows: —

'Newall's Buildings, Manchester, April 27.

Dear Sir,—A number of gentlemen have met here to-day to consider what steps should be taken to promote a cordial union of all classes of reformers in favour of an improvement in our system of Parliamentary representation. They feel that the increasing expenditure and increasing taxation are causes of the deepest anxiety, and they doubt the possibility of any permanent remedy being applied whilst the taxpayers are for the most part excluded from direct influence in Parliament.

I have been requested to address this circular to you, to ascertain how far you think the extension of the franchise to all householders, with the protection of the ballot, the more equal distribution of the electoral power by means of electoral districts, and the shortening of the duration of Parliaments to a period not exceeding three years—would afford a system of representation such as the middle-classes, now partially enfranchised, would generally acquiesce in, and which the unenfranchised classes would accept as a substantial admission to their legitimate place in the constitution.

I shall be glad also to know whether you think that at the present time a movement is desirable in favour of the changes I have indicated, and if you are disposed to co-operate with an association founded for the purpose of promoting them. I shall be glad also to know what—so far as you have ascertained—is the prevailing feeling of the inhabitants of your town or district on the subject to which I have referred.

The replies to this circular will not be published, and I will thank you to favour me with an answer at your earliest convenience.

This circular bears the signature of a gentleman, whom I will not call distinguished, for that would be prostituting an epithet—and whom I will not call notorious, for that might be offensive—and whom therefore I will describe as the well-known Mr. George Wilson. The newspaper goes on to say—

A very few weeks will now determine whether the country is to have a new league, more formidable than the former one, inasmuch as it will gather within its fold many sects and parties who

stood aloof from the Anti-Corn-Law League in the early stage of its operations.

Now, I have shown the House, without exaggeration, quoting merely their own documents, the manner in which this thing is brought about. It is factitious—it is not popular. Let me not be misunderstood—let it not be said that I am opposed to popular feeling when I say this. No: it is the same movement that has given you colonial, Parliamentary, and commercial reform, and now proposes to give you financial reform. It is the same movement that has always resulted, by their own confession, in disaster and disappointment. But the remarkable circumstance is this—that the present movement has not in the slightest degree originated in any class of the people. Even if the people be misled, it is possible that there might be a popular movement and yet erroneous; but this is erroneous and not popular. But the moral I draw from all this—from observing this system of organised agitation—this playing and paltering with popular passions for the aggrandisement of one too ambitious class—the moral I draw is this—why are the people of England forced to find leaders among these persons? The proper leaders of the people are the gentlemen of England. If they are not the leaders of the people, I do not see why there should be gentlemen. Yes—it is because the gentlemen of England have been negligent of their duties, and unmindful of their station, that the system of professional agitation, so ruinous to the best interests of the country, has arisen in England.

It was not always so. My hon. Friends around me call themselves the country party. Why, that was the name once in England of a party who were the foremost to vindicate popular rights—who were the

natural leaders of the people, and the champions of everything national and popular; and you must blame yourselves alone if you have allowed the power that has been entrusted to you by the constitution to slip from your hands, to be exercised for other interests than the general good of your country. When Sir William Wyndham was the leader of the country party, do you think he would have allowed any chairman or deputy-chairman, any lecturer or pamphleteer, to deprive him of his hold on the heart of the people of this country? No, never! Do you think that when the question of suffrage was brought before the House, he would have allowed any class who had boldly avowed their determination to obtain predominance, to take up and settle that question? Read what Sir J. Hynde Cotton, in the days of Walpole, said on the question of the suffrage? He was one of the greatest gentlemen in the country: he did not run away every night from the House and pair till half-past eleven, and let the country go to the dogs. If it be true that we are on the eve of troublous times—if it indeed be necessary that changes should take place in this country—let them be effected by those who ought to be the leaders in all political and social changes. Then we shall not find changes carried into effect for the unblushing purpose of securing a middle-class Government, but an English and a national Government, the pride of the people, and in which confidence can be placed. Then, if you are called on to make changes, it will be in your power to make them within the scope and according to the spirit of the English constitution; because, notwithstanding the sneers of the hon. Gentleman and his Friend to-night, I am not ashamed to say that I wish to maintain the constitution; and I do not mean, by

the term constitution, merely the House of Commons, and still less a particular party in the House, which some hon. Gentlemen opposite seem always to consider the English constitution. But I would effect these changes, if necessary, according to the spirit of the constitution: it is a capacious spirit—it will allow you to do all that is required, and yet maintain the institutions of the country. And indeed, Sir, I would maintain that constitution, not merely because it has secured to us the benignant sway of an ancient monarchy, mitigated in its operation by the co-ordinate authority of popular estates—not merely because it has planted English liberty broadly and deeply in the land, and not made it a thing dependent on the breath of an individual, or the caprice or passion of some great city—not merely because it has secured to us the due administration of justice, safety of person, respect for property (though these are all considerations doubtless of vast import)—but I would maintain that constitution because I firmly believe that, of all existing polities, it is that system which most tends to secure the happiness and elevate the condition of the great body of the people.

JULY 9, 1850.

On Mr. Locke King's Motion, 'That leave be given to bring in a Bill to make the Franchise in counties in England and Wales the same as that in boroughs, by giving the right of voting to all occupiers of tenements of the annual value of 10*l*.'

MR. HUME, SIR DE L. EVANS, MR. G. THOMPSON, LORD D. STUART, MR. H. DRUMMOND, and MR. BRIGHT supported the motion, which was opposed by MR. NEWDEGATE and LORD JOHN RUSSELL. The Mover replied; after which MR. GRATTAN addressed the House.

Mr. DISRAELI: Sir, I ought to apologise to the House for rising after the hon. Mover has made his reply. But, as another hon. Gentleman has spoken, and as the question has assumed a new aspect, I hope these circumstances may plead that apology. What I have noticed during the debate is, that English Members on the other side have found fault with the Reform Act for England, and an Irish Member on the other side has found fault with the Reform Act for Ireland. On this side of the House we are not responsible for those Acts. The noble Lord opposite has a deeper personal interest in them than we have. In listening to this debate, the circumstance that has particularly struck me has been the erroneous apprehension on the part of hon. Members of what our constitution is. Sir, I always believed and supposed that every gentleman, whatever his opinion may be of the proper franchise for England or Ireland, considered that the constitution

of England was a monarchy, modified by estates of the realm, that is, by privileged classes, who are invested with those privileges for the advantage of the community. We have a Throne—we have a body of Peers, and a body of Commons, who are in possession of certain privileges, which privileges you may increase, enlarge, restrict, or diminish; but still those privileges have always been, and must remain, the privileges of particular orders, and enjoyed by only a limited portion of the community. We know what is the result, whatever may have been the original intention of such a constitution. It has established the aristocratic principle in the widest and most noble sense of the term. But it has permitted all classes to aspire; and however society might be divided in olden days, there was no class which could say it did not possess the privilege of electing representatives to the House of Commons, from the proudest manorial lord to the humblest artisan. Less than a quarter of a century ago this was the acknowledged state of things. You thought proper to terminate that scheme. It was terminated by the noble Lord in his official capacity; enthusiastically supported by many Members of this House. There is no Member opposite who has not acquired his seat in this House by adopting the views of Government, and the principles of the Reform party. They are responsible for, and they ought to be grateful to, the Reform Act. But now a great many Gentlemen opposite seem discontented with the settlement of 1832, who at that time were ready to vote black was white in its behalf*—who went to the country for the Bill, the whole Bill,

* Mr. Hume, M.P. for Montrose, said in 1832, when Lord Grey was dismissed, that 'the Liberal party ought to be ready to vote black's white to keep out the Tories.'

and nothing but the Bill—who had so profoundly and so maturely investigated the question, that they resolved that the perfect scheme which they adopted should not be altered or modified, and who gave their deliberate consent to a change which they determined should be permanent. But ever since the Bill, the whole Bill, and nothing but the Bill, has been gained, the result appears to give only partial satisfaction. We constantly hear querulous complaints of the law from hon. Gentlemen opposite, who were sent to this House by the operation of this law, and who represent what are called liberal opinions in this House. These hon. Gentlemen, we find, are constantly quarrelling with the political arrangements which sent them into the House.

I speak not only my own feelings, but the feelings of many of my friends, when I say we have no superstitious reverence for the Reform Act. I will admit I should have opposed it had I been in the House at the time, brought forward as it was by a party, in opposition to whom, from historical conviction, I ever acted. But it was carried by a large majority. It may have been carried by agitation out of the House as well as in the House; it may have been carried by popular passion, but unquestionably it was ultimately received as the settlement of a great public question—not a great party question. No doubt, in that settlement the interests of the party who carried the measure were duly considered. Had we introduced the measure, and had we carried it, no doubt we too should have considered the interests of our party. I willingly give the noble Lord credit, that his first consideration was his country, the next, his party—all I will say that, though the settlement of the question was hostile to us, the promise that our adhesion to this law should be sincere has

been respected and fulfilled. And, now, though we have no superstitious reverence for the Bill, we cannot be blind to the great public inconvenience and injury likely to arise from the proceedings of hon. Gentlemen opposite, who, in a retail manner, are sapping that settlement which they accepted at the time with such wholesale enthusiasm. I do not think it was a settlement that might not have been improved. I regret that when the privileges of the working classes were abrogated, no equivalent was devised. I regret that in the Reform Act the rights of the working classes were not more respected. But who voted against them? Who voted against the freemen? The liberal Members, the clamourers for the whole Bill, and nothing but the Bill. And who since has been a more active opponent than the hon. Member for Montrose of this class of voters? Though corruption might in some instances be proved against them, as it has been proved against other classes, this was not sufficient to invalidate their privileges—their rights ought not to have been destroyed, unless an equivalent had been first proposed. I think, so far as we are concerned, when we see these perpetual quarrels about the operation of the Reform Act on the other side, we might be silent; but I deem it more respectful to the House and to the Government to express our opinions on this question.

Sir, what I wish to know is, what hon. Gentlemen opposite mean? Do they mean to say they will no longer endure the ancient constitution of the country —a monarchy modified by the political estates of the realm? If they are of opinion that every acre ought to be represented—every pound sterling of capital, and every individual of the population, ought to be represented in this House—if they say this, then I

reply, you propose a revolution in the constitution. If the House is to represent all material and personal interests, it is absurd to suppose any influence can be exercised by any other estate of the realm, or by the Crown itself. But are you prepared to do this? If so, why do you come forward with a 10*l.* franchise, which, when met by an Amendment, you withdraw? Are you prepared to say that every man 'full grown' shall be entitled to the suffrage, and ought to be allowed to exercise it? Why not make the proposition? On the contrary, the most eminent Members of your party have made speeches against it. The hon. Member for the West Riding (Mr. Cobden) disclaimed this plan of representation. The hon. Member for Manchester (Mr. Bright) even limited himself on this subject. Not one man of eminence countenances the proposal about every 'full grown' man, though what 'full grown' really means—what description of man the term applies to—it is not very easy to understand. But if this is, in your language, the House of the people—if you mean to concentrate in it all the personal and material interests of the multitude, then you are bound to give the suffrage to every one. You do not propose that—you disclaim it—you shrink from it—you admit that it is dangerous. Then I come to this, that the constitution of this country is a matter of convention and compact, and that the Commons of England must be a body, greater or smaller, which possesses and exercises a privilege. If you admit that, and you have admitted it, it becomes a question for us to decide, what we think, on the whole, is a wise and politic arrangement of these privileges. The noble Lord proposed at no very distant period a certain arrangement that was accepted after a great struggle,

if not cordially, at least completely; it immensely increased the number of the Commons of this country who were privileged—that estate of the realm was greatly increased in number, in consequence, and in power; and from the increase of that power considerable, and on the whole beneficial, changes have taken place in the legislation of this country. Now, will you meet the question fairly, and tell us that you are prepared to change the constitution of the country? You will not. You come forward at the end of the Session, and propose a resolution, and make speeches which do not apply to the resolution, but something much wider and more vague; but not one of you will say that you wish to concentrate all power in this House. Not one of you will do that, because you know that our answer would be that you would have then to entrust privileges to persons you will not confer them on.

It becomes, then, a question whether the settlement made by your party in 1832, on the whole, was not a settlement well-considered at the time by the nation, and accepted by the nation. The hon. and gallant Member for Westminster told us to-night that nothing could be more preposterous and absurd than to suppose that the body of constituents, as representatives of the population of this country, which was deemed satisfactory twenty years ago, should be deemed satisfactory now. But you quite forget that under the machinery of your Reform Act, the constituency expands in relative proportion to the population. According to the hon. and gallant Member for Westminster, the House might suppose that eighteen years ago the House settled and decided the number of constituents that were to choose the House of Commons. But you forget—or choose to forget—that they established at that time a certain

number of tests, and that we can annually place on the roll of the Commons those additions to our numbers which those tests qualify and sanction. The argument of the hon. and gallant Member for Westminster is, therefore, idle. But what have we continually heard in and out of the House of Commons? Speeches addressed to the working population, telling them that they have political power at their command if they choose to acquire it. Have I not heard eloquent addresses to the working classes, showing how, if any working man realised an income of 40*s.* per annum, he could thereby acquire political power? Have we not been told over and over again that the object you had in view was to change the depositaries of power, and that the obvious and facile mode of enabling the working classes to do this was to possess themselves, as they thus easily might, of the elective franchise? Have we not heard over and over again that the working men of England, if ordinarily industrious and frugal, could easily possess themselves of that franchise, and thereby change the depositaries of power? And are we to be told to-night that with all these advantages—with all this machinery supplied by the constitution, the people of England are so besotted and degraded—so incapable of self-exertion and self-respect, that they cannot make the effort that is necessary to possess the power which is described as being so desirable? On this point the whole of the question hinges. Is the possession of the franchise to be a privilege—the privilege of industry and public virtue, or is it to be a right—the right of every one, however degraded, however indolent, however unworthy? I am for the system which maintains in this country a large and free Government, having confidence in the energies and the

faculties of man. Therefore, I say, make the franchise a privilege, but let it be the privilege of the civic virtues. Hon. Gentlemen opposite would degrade the franchise to the man, instead of raising the man to the franchise. If you want to have a free aristocratic country —free because aristocratic—I use the word aristocratic in its noblest sense—I mean that aristocratic freedom which enables every man to achieve the best position in the State to which his qualities entitle him; I know not that we can do better than adhere to the mitigated monarchy of England, with power in the Crown, order in one estate of the realm, and liberty in the other. It is from that happy combination that we have produced a state of society that all other nations look upon with admiration and with envy.

We have been told to-night by the hon. and gallant Member for Westminster,* to look at France, and make that our model: he tells us that Paris has 74,000 electors, and that he only represents 7,000. But does the hon. Gentleman recollect that for every Parisian elector there are two bayonets to keep him in order? And when we remember that 7,000 electors have sent him to deliver these unworthy sentiments, we cannot forget that they are the electors who for centuries sent men to this House fully capable of maintaining the liberties of the country —that it was they who sent Mr. Fox and Sir Francis Burdett, and others who were the life and leaders of this country for more than 200 years, to maintain the great society of which we are all proud to be members. To compare such a system and such a country with France—to compare it with a country from which the next telegraph may bring a fresh combination of anarchy, is a degradation I did not think a

* General Sir De Lacy Evans, K.C.B.

reformed House of Parliament would have tolerated. Sir, I leave the question in the hands of the House. I have been told that it would be a good thing to leave the Government to fight it out with its usual supporters. Probably in Parliamentary tactics that would be the wisest course, but with such tactics I will have nothing to do. I respect the verdict of the nation upon this subject: notwithstanding the pettier details and arrangements of the Reform Act may have been intended to consolidate Whig power, and gratify the passion for Whig patronage, I think it yet a settlement accepted by the great body of the people; and in a country which has attained to so much political power and material prosperity, we ought not idly, for the gratification of any personal or factious feeling, to disturb it. You disturb it. But what is the real secret of all these July Motions for Parliamentary reform? You know very well that if an appeal to the privileges of the Commons of England was made, as they have been enlarged by the Reform Act, not one in ten of you would be returned to this House. And you think that by some patching up of the constituency, some altering, and botching, and varnishing, and veneering, you may still remain Members of Parliament. There is not the slightest chance of it. Have universal suffrage to-morrow—do what none of you dare—propose that every full-grown man shall have a vote, and I believe most sincerely you would be swept from the House. I do not believe that the artisans of this country—I do not believe that constituencies, however qualified, or however constructed, would support you; but, on the contrary, that under such circumstances, the great interests of the country would have the influence they ought to have—that the great body of the people would be faithful to the tra-

ditionary interests of Englishmen, and declare that whatever the political form—whatever the franchise —whatever the system you adopt, they would be for the monarchy and the empire, for that polity which has made Englishmen eminent, and that they would give a national verdict against the scheme of national degradation of which you are the friends.

APRIL 2, 1851.

On the second reading of Mr. Locke King's Bill, 'To make the Franchise in counties in England and Wales the same as that in boroughs, by giving the right of voting to all occupiers of tenements of the annual value of 10*l.*'

The second reading which occasioned a long debate had been supported by MR. BRIGHT and MR. HUME, and opposed by MR. FOX MAULE and LORD J. RUSSELL.*

Mr. DISRAELI: Sir, but for some observations which have been made by the right hon. Gentleman opposite, the Secretary at War, as to the conduct of hon. Members sitting on this side of the House, I should have been disposed to allow the question to go to a division without trespassing upon the attention of the House on this occasion. But the Secretary at War, with an almost convulsive effort to reconstruct a Reform party, has described those who sit on this side of the House, as being banded against every species of Parliamentary Reform. I am at a loss, Sir, to understand upon what authority the Secretary at War speaks (Mr. F. Maule intimated his dissent). The right hon. Gentleman informs me that he did not make use of the observation which I have attributed to him, and which, as I have not taken it down, trusting to my memory, I must

* The introduction of this Bill was the memorable occasion on which Lord John Russell first intimated that he was prepared to recede from his previous principle of 'finality,' and to disturb the Parliamentary Settlement of 1832; and which has led to so much subsequent agitation and perplexity.

therefore recall. But I must remind the right hon. Gentleman, who, though he did not use the words which I have ascribed to him, unfortunately made an impression to the same effect, that when last year a measure for increasing the franchise in Ireland was introduced, hon. Members on this side of the House adopted the principle, without even the slightest opposition. The right hon. Gentleman, with remarkable consistency, advocates the principle of the measure of the hon. Member for East Surrey, on the ground that it will tend to increase the franchise, which is now enjoyed by the 50*l.* tenants in the counties. But the right hon. Gentleman may possibly remember, that it was not from himself or his friends that that clause in the Reform Bill emanated. I feel bound to say, when I hear the 50*l.* tenants in the counties described as a class not worthy of the franchise, and yet, that those who so describe them are disposed to extend the franchise to others possessing a far lower qualification, that in my opinion those who belong to that respectable class have exercised the franchise in a manner creditable to themselves, and advantageous to the country; nor have they, in this respect, proved themselves at all inferior even to those who possess the highest qualification that entitles to the franchise.

When the Reform Bill was proposed, those who proposed it and supported it were in the habit of saying, that no sincere adhesion would ever be given to the Reform Bill by those who sat on the Opposition side of the House; and it was in vain for them to say when it became a law, that they would give it their sincere and complete adhesion. But they have done so—they have proved their sincerity, and have supported that settlement of the franchise ever since. The authors of the

Reform Bill declared, that the qualification of men for official employment depended upon an adhesion to that measure. No man was ever to hold office, or to have a seat in Parliament, who was not a sincere Reformer; that is to say who did not support the 'Bill, the whole Bill, and nothing but the Bill.' I appeal to every gentleman who knows anything of the matter, whether, though not a formal, it was not a virtual understanding that the Bill, when once passed, was to be regarded, for a considerable period of time, as the settlement of the great question of Parliamentary reform. So long as the political party, who introduced that settlement upheld it, I doubt very much whether it would have been wise or politic to sanction any alteration. It would have led to discussions, probably very fruitless of results, and only encouraging agitation, prejudicial to the general interests of the community. But, when not only the political party who introduced the Reform Bill, but the very statesman who framed, modelled, and ushered it into the House, gives up his own handiwork, we hold ourselves to be perfectly free to consider the question, without reference to any antecedents, as to whether we were opposed to the Bill in 1830, or not—without, in fact, any reference to the past—but with reference only to those considerations which concern the public welfare.

For my own part, Sir, I entirely protest against what is popularly understood as the principle of Finality. All that I will pledge myself to do, is, to oppose any measure of Parliamentary reform, which has for its object merely the retaining and confirming in power some political section. I have that confidence in the sense and spirit of the country, that, if a measure were now to be brought forward which

had that limited and partial object, I believe it would be universally scouted, instead of creating that enthusiasm which the hon. Gentlemen sitting on the Treasury benches seem at the eleventh hour to anticipate. Upon that ground, I shall oppose any measure which seems intended merely to displace the constitutional influence of that territorial preponderance, which the hon. Gentleman has referred to, and which I believe to be the best security for our liberties, and the best means of retaining that confirmed and permanent character, which the institutions in the history of this country present.

FEBRUARY 9, 1852.

On Lord John Russell's Motion, 'That leave be given to bring in a Bill to extend the Right of Voting for Members of Parliament.'*

MR. HUME, SIR J. WALSH, SIR R. H. INGLIS, MR. BRIGHT, MR. NEWDEGATE, LORD HARRY VANE, COL. SIBTHORP, and other Members spoke on the motion.

Mr. DISRAELI: Some doubt, I understand, prevails as to the time at which the noble Lord proposes to move the Second Reading of the Bill. I was, unfortunately, not in the House when the noble Lord referred to this subject, but I understand that the Bill is not ready to be laid upon the table. It is customary when a statement of importance, such as that which the noble Lord has this evening made, is addressed to the House, that the Bill on which it professes to be founded should be laid on the table at the same time; but I understand it is the intention of the noble Lord not to bring in the Bill until Wednesday next.

Lord JOHN RUSSELL: I will bring in the Bill on Wednesday, or, it may be, Thursday. I will then pro-

* The chief provisions in this Bill, were the reduction of the franchise in counties to 20*l.* rated value, and in boroughs to 5*l.* rated value; the extension of the franchise to all persons, whether in counties or boroughs, who paid direct taxes to the amount of 40*s.* a year; and the grouping with neighbouring towns of all boroughs with less than 500 electors: such boroughs being 67 in number.

pose that it be read a second time on Friday fortnight.

Mr. DISRAELI: I hardly think that statement satisfactory. It is impossible that we can properly consider the question till the Bill is in our hands. The statement made by the noble Lord is, no doubt, very interesting; but, seeing the diversity of opinion which exists as to the proposition of the Government, I think it absolutely necessary that we should have the Bill before us preliminary to fixing the second reading; and that the time allowed for consideration should date from the day on which the Bill is placed on the table. I do not think an interval of fourteen days sufficient. I collect from the statement of the noble Lord that sixty-seven boroughs will be largely affected by the measure, and that certain towns are to be connected with them; and I think it is but fair that the opinion of the population of these boroughs and towns should be ascertained on the subject. I am not aware of the period that elapsed between the bringing in of the first Reform Bill and the second reading; but I believe it was much more considerable than that which the noble Lord now proposes to allow; and in the case of the repeal of the corn-laws, I remember Sir Robert Peel proposed that not less than fourteen days should be given for the country to express an opinion on the proposal. It should be recollected that not we alone, but the country, should be allowed a fair opportunity of becoming acquainted with this important measure. Now, in point of detail, the measure for the repeal of the corn-laws is not in any way to be compared with the proposition sketched by the noble Lord to-night. The noble Lord is not prepared with the Bill, and I trust, therefore, the noble

Lord will consider what I have said, and give ample time for the country to become acquainted with its details before the second reading. The noble Lord proposes fourteen days. But under any circumstances, and even in the case of a Bill of comparatively an ordinary kind, such a delay as that would be granted. In the present case, I think the second reading should not take place for a month. I say again, this time is necessary, not for us, but for the country—for those who are to be affected by the Bill. The subject ought to be fully placed before the country, and ample time should be given for the fullest investigation of the details of the measure. I am certain no measure of this kind can give content, unless a preliminary investigation takes place into its provisions. Under any circumstances I should appeal for sufficient time. Under present circumstances I think I must press for it. The Bill is not to be placed on the table till Thursday. It is a most unusual thing for a Minister to come forward and to make a statement introductory to a Bill, and not to have the Bill ready. We might have assumed, not doubting that Government had made up their minds on the subject, that the delay in producing the Bill was to be attributed to some technical details requiring further consideration; but when we recollect the seventeen or twenty-seven Cabinet Councils that have recently taken place, the question assumes a very different aspect. It may be that when the Bill is before us some of its provisions may not agree with the statement we have heard to-night, or it may be invested with a great many details which may be additions to that statement. That, in my opinion, is another reason for a much more considerable delay being afforded to the country than that which the noble Lord has pro-

posed. So far as we are concerned, fourteen days might be sufficient; but I ask the House whether, considering the importance of the measure and its details, fourteen days would be sufficient for the country? If the noble Lord is not prepared to lay the Bill on the table till Thursday, I think a month from this day—which, after all, would not be much more than three Parliamentary weeks—should elapse before the second reading.

With regard to the measure itself, I am not disposed at this period to enter into any discussion of it. I cannot, however, help congratulating Parliamentary reformers on the content with which they have accepted the repast provided for them; the voracity of their appetites seems to me satisfied with short commons. Having on two occasions ventured to mention the conditions which a Minister should observe in bringing forward such a measure, I confess that I think the noble Lord has observed them. My impression, in listening to the statement of the noble Lord, was, that there was nothing in it which had any tendency to disturb—I will not say the balance between the two great interests of the country, but I will rather say the adjustment made by the Reform Bill in 1832. I do not use the word balance, because I do not think any such balance exists. I think the adjustment of 1832 gave a preponderance to the towns and the commercial classes. To that adjustment we bow. So far as I could discover from the oral statement of the Minister to-night, I do not think there is anything in this new plan which has a serious tendency to disturb it; and therefore, on that ground, as no change would probably be in our favour, I felt considerably relieved. At the same time, I must tell the hon. Member for Man-

chester (Mr. Bright) that I cannot at all accept his dogma, that the present adjustment is unfair because a borough like Thetford returns two Members, and a city like Manchester returns no greater number. Throughout the whole of the arguments I have heard on this subject from Gentlemen opposite, both here and as reported in other places, a great fallacy is observable, and pervades all that they bring forward on the subject, as I shall be prepared to show at the right time and on the fitting occasion. The hon. Gentleman has referred to the cases of Thetford and Manchester, and it is only because he has done so that I enter upon the subject at all now. The inference, founded on the two tests of population and property, that because a borough like Thetford returns two Members, therefore Manchester should return the number of Members proportionate to its population and property, is altogether erroneous. The inference, indeed, is the other way. It is that such places as Thetford should not return two Members, not that Manchester should return more. A paper has just been put into my hands, which has some reference to this part of the subject. It relates to North Cheshire. The total population of the county is 217,000. There are two considerable manufacturing towns, and only two in that great division—Macclesfield, with a population of 33,000, and the too-celebrated Stockport, with a population of upwards of 50,000 ; together 83,000, which, deducted from the whole population of the Northern Division of Cheshire, leaves 134,000. Now, these two towns return four Members, though the county population, which amounts to 130,000, returns only two! Even admitting the tests laid down by the hon. Member to be just, which I do not do, it could never be inferred

from it that Manchester should have eight, ten, or fourteen Members, the burden always of the hon. Gentleman's argument on this point—but only that Thetford should not have two Members.

With regard to the second condition that there should be no attempt to establish the undue preponderance of any particular party, I must reserve my opinion till we have the details before us. When I see how the Government propose to deal with sixty or seventy boroughs—when I see what those boroughs are, and how they are to be managed under the new arrangement, then I shall better know how to form an opinion. But I shall assume now that in 1852, after the experience on these subjects which the House has acquired, any of those not very creditable manœuvres as to the settlement of boundaries which distinguished the first Reform Bill, will not very easily occur. I cannot believe that any party in this House, or out of it, will support a Minister in any arrangement of the new boroughs, the object of which is to support his own party in Parliament: I have that confidence in the increased knowledge both of the House of Commons and the country on these subjects, as to feel that those manœuvres cannot be repeated. Whether, then, I look at the Bill as I collect it from the noble Lord's statement, where it appears to me to have a character not opposed to the constitutional arrangement at present existing; or whether I assume, which I do, that all arrangements respecting the new constituencies will be conceived and executed in a fair spirit, I do not find on these two points grounds of opposition. But I reserve to myself the full right, when the subject is fairly before the House, to consider whether, under the circumstances of the case, it was

a wise thing to undertake any measure upon the subject, and, if it were a wise thing, whether the present measure is one adequate and suited to the occasion.

I confess, so far as I can form an opinion—but indeed I do not feel authorised, till the Bill is in my hand, to give an opinion; but my impression is that the Bill is one of very questionable propriety. The noble Lord has on several occasions dilated on the wisdom of settling great questions in moments of comparative calm and tranquillity. I agree with him. I think it is wise in a statesman, if he has a subject of great importance to grapple with—a subject calculated to arouse the passions and affect the interests of great masses of the people—that he should attempt it in moments of tranquillity; but he is bound to deal with it so that the settlement may be—I will not say final, for that is not an epithet suitable to human legislation—but permanent. So far as I can now form an opinion, I cannot say that I think the measure brought forward by the noble Lord in that sense a very statesmanlike measure. What is the great object of this 5*l.* franchise? That you should admit the working classes to the exercise of the suffrage. I have always been the advocate of an industrial suffrage; but I am not satisfied that this 5*l.* franchise will act in that way. I am not by any means clear that there was no measure better fitted for this purpose, no arrangement more apposite and more calculated to effect this end, than merely lowering the amount on which the suffrage depends. I have here a paper moved for a few years ago by the hon. Member for Marylebone (Sir B. Hall), which contains a list of the boroughs, with their population and constituencies, in England. I was anxious to find out the 67 boroughs with which the noble Lord means

to deal in this Bill, and I commenced with the list before me. I began with Calne; went through what I supposed must be the 67 boroughs, assuming from the smallness of the constituencies that those I selected must be the 67 places which the noble Lord wishes to disturb. Then, having exhausted the 67 boroughs, I proceeded with the list, taking those that, from the number of their constituencies, I presumed must be exempted from the operation of the noble Lord's Bill —those above 500. The first borough I found on the exempted list was St. Albans! I only mention this to show that in settling this question we have a great many details to consider. The merit of a measure like the present depends very much on its details; and that is the reason why, when a Minister makes a proposition of this nature, and is not prepared to lay his Bill on the table—a very strange occurrence, certainly—I think the country have a right to expect that ample time should be given to consider those details.

I have thus expressed what I really feel on the matter. I feel, so far as the two conditions referred to go, that I am not prepared on those grounds to interpose any obstruction to the Bill of the noble Lord. On the greater ground I shall reserve my opinion. I have much hesitation as to the propriety of introducing any measure at all on the present occasion. I have my doubts, too, whether the measure introduced is of that deep and comprehensive character required. I think the noble Lord ought to bear in mind that it is of the utmost importance that a question of this kind should be maturely considered before it is decided on; that all measures for the adjustment of the franchise should be of a permanent character. Indeed, the noble Lord himself ought to be the last to doubt the correctness

of this principle. I do not think that it is to the credit of this House, or the country, or the noble Lord himself as a statesman, that every year he should be altering the franchise in Ireland. I think, too, if the noble Lord had only sufficiently considered that subject, he would not be in the singular position of having twelve months ago brought forward a Reform Bill for Ireland, which he now acknowledges is incompetent to carry out its objects. I hope that is not ominous of the result of the measure now brought forward. I think it would be just as well for hon. Gentlemen on both sides of the House that this measure, now introduced by the Minister of the Crown and supported by them, should be one that would be likely to last. The hon. Gentlemen opposite have now had some experience in that matter. They received with enthusiasm the Bill of '32; they denounced everybody who opposed it, and insisted that it would in every respect answer their purpose; they said nothing less would satisfy them, and that nothing more would they accept; yet they have been mistaken. I think they ought to consider—I will not say with suspicion, but without passion—the proposition of the Minister on this occasion. It should be remembered, too, that we have many other important subjects to discuss during the present Session; and I warn you not to be diverted in your attention from other great reforms by Parliamentary reform. The great body of the nation will not be satisfied if the entire time of the Session is occupied with discussions on Parliamentary reform. The people out of doors wish the whole question of colonial government to be considered—the people out of doors wish to have the principles of taxation properly established—the people out of doors are anxious to know whether there will

be any law reform or not. These are questions which will require the Minister's serious consideration in the management of their laborious details. They are reasons why we should not approach the subject thrown before us thus early in the Session with any degree of passion; that we should try to ascertain whether the time really needs such a change as that now introduced; whether that change is required by the nation; and whether the proposition of the Government is calculated to satisfy it.

MARCH 25, 1852.

On Mr. Hume's Motion, 'That leave be given to bring in a Bill to amend the National Representation by extending the Elective Franchise in England and Wales, so that every man of full age, and not subject to any mental or legal disability, who shall have been the resident occupier of a house, or of part of a house as a lodger, for twelve months, and shall have been duly rated to the poor of that parish for that time, shall be registered as an elector, and be entitled to vote for a Representative in Parliament:

'Also, by enacting that votes shall be taken by ballot; that the duration of Parliaments shall not exceed three years, and that the proportion of Representatives be made more consistent with the amount of population and property.'

Sir Joshua Walmisley seconded the motion, and Mr. H. Drummond, Sir William Page Wood, Mr. Napier, and Mr. Roebuck took part in the Debate.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer:* Sir, although the subject does not appear to be so interesting to the House as might have been supposed, I cannot allow the present opportunity to pass without trespassing for a few moments upon its attention. And, Sir, I shall endeavour to do that which, so far as I have been able to observe, has not yet been done by any Gentleman who

* In the interval between the introduction of a Reform Bill by Lord John Russell, as Prime Minister, and the above Motion of Mr. Hume, a change of Government had taken place. Lord Derby had been commanded by the Queen to form a Ministry, and he had entrusted the leadership of the House of Commons to Mr. Disraeli, as Chancellor of the Exchequer. Mr. Disraeli had never filled any office when he was called upon to lead the House of Commons.

has preceded me—not even by the hon. Member himself who brought forward this Motion — for I will address myself to the Motion itself. We have had from the hon. and learned Gentleman who has just addressed you (Mr. Roebuck) one of those dissertations which no one can make more interesting on subjects of an abstract character; and we have had several speeches from other Gentlemen, certainly, on the subject of Parliamentary Reform. But it appeared to me that those speeches were mainly addressed, not to the Motion upon the paper, but rather to that more celebrated, though evanescent, proposition, which for a moment excited so much interest, but to which, with a due regard to the feelings of the noble Lord the Member for the city of London (Lord J. Russell), I think hon. Members opposite should have had the delicacy not to allude. Sir, among those who have addressed the House is the hon. and learned Gentleman the Member for the city of Oxford (Sir W. P. Wood), who delivered himself of a very elaborate speech, which was evidently prepared to support a Ministerial proposition; and one consequence of the train of his argument was, with somewhat of inconsistency, a determination to vote against a proposition which for three successive years he had always supported. [Sir W. P. Wood: I said I should not vote at all.] Well, of not voting at all on a measure which for three years he had supported—a scarcely less interesting dilemma.

Now, Sir, when I look at the Motion before the House, I see four propositions contained in it. With a view to place them succinctly before the House, I will recapitulate them. We have a proposal to bring in a Bill which is to extend the franchise; which is to insure that that franchise, when it is exercised, should

be taken by means of the ballot; which is to secure a triennial election of Parliaments; and which is to change materially the distribution of representatives, so that they shall be made more proportionate to the amount of population and property. These are the four leading principles involved in the measure offered for our adoption. I understand from the speech of the hon. Gentleman who seconded the Motion (Sir J. Walmisley), that the distribution of representatives which would be deemed more consistent with the amount of population and of property is, to use the language of that hon. Gentleman, a redistribution which will diminish what he calls territorial influence. ['Hear!'] I am glad I am stating fairly the question before our consideration; and I will commence the few observations I shall venture to make by referring first to this fourth proposition, because it is a more novel topic, and one exciting perhaps the most interest.

Well, Sir, I challenge the position which is assumed by hon. Gentlemen opposite upon this point. I deny that the proportion of representatives is unfairly arranged in favour of territorial influence. I deny all the positions assumed in that pamphlet which has been freely circulated, and which has been before the subject of Parliamentary criticism. The hon. Gentleman who seconded the Motion referred to some observations I made on a preceding night. When we had been frequently told that it was a monstrous anomaly that a large town should return only two Members, and that a small rural borough should be represented by the same number of Members, I reminded the House on that occasion of the fact that there were rural, or, if the hon. Gentleman prefers the word, territorial constituencies, which, contrasted

with the constituencies of large towns, experienced equal injustice, if that distribution of the representation which hon. Gentlemen impugn, which they impugn because of their peculiar interest in towns, and which they propose to rectify by their redistribution, be an injustice. I put the case fairly. The case instanced by me on a previous night was one which, as it is a brief one, I will refer to again, though I have others to which I am also desirous of calling the attention of the House. Mind, I am giving no opinion now upon the particular circumstances before us; I am confining myself entirely to the endeavour of laying facts fairly before the House. You say that the proportion of representatives is so arranged by the present system, that the town populations are not fairly represented in our Constitution and in this House. I deny the accuracy of that statement. I give no opinion at present upon the expediency of any preponderance being given to country or to town in the Legislature, but confine myself now to mere statements of fact. Let me call the attention of the House to the case of North Cheshire; and I invite hon. Members, while I do so, to bear in mind the most advantageous instances which have been brought before our notice on the other side of the question—to bear in mind, for example, if they please, the contrasted cases of Manchester and Thetford. In North Cheshire we have only two towns, and both of great manufacturing importance—Macclesfield and Stockport. The total population of the county is 249,000; the total population of the two towns I have just named is 93,000. There remains, therefore, as the difference between the two, 156,000 for the numbers of the country population. But while the two towns, with a population of 93,000,

return four Members to Parliament, the rural constituency, with a population of 156,000, return no more than two Members. Take the case of South Cheshire, in which there is only one town of note, that of Chester. The population of the county is 206,000, and the population of the town of Chester 28,000, leaving 178,000 of the population of that county who are not represented except by the county Members. The town of Chester, with its population of 28,000, returns two Members to this House, while the county constituency of 178,000 returns only the same number. I will take other instances of great manufacturing counties. I will take the case of South Derbyshire, where there is only one considerable town. The population of South Derbyshire is 166,000, and that of the town of Derby a little exceeds 40,000, leaving 125,000 of rural population. That population of 40,000 returns two Members, and the rural population of 125,000 returns only the same number. I will now take North Durham. That district of the county contains the important towns of Durham, Gateshead, South Shields, and Sunderland. The entire population of North Durham is 272,000, including both the town population and the county population, and it presents this interesting fact, that while the population of the towns is in amount exactly the same as the county population, yet the 136,000 of the great commercial and manufacturing towns I have named are represented by six Members, while the county population of 136,000—the other moiety of North Durham — are only represented by two Members. I might still pursue this. I will take the important county of Kent. West Kent has a population of 400,000. It contains four great towns—Chatham, Greenwich, Maidstone, and Rochester, one of

these towns having a population of 100,000. The population of the towns is 169,000, and the remaining rural population is 228,000; yet the urban population of 169,000 returns seven Members to Parliament, while the 228,000 only return the two Members for West Kent!

Yes, but year after year we have been told of the monstrous injustice of the distribution of the present electoral system — that our representative system is favourable to territorial influences, and that artificial means have been devised of giving preponderance to the landed interest. But we never heard a single word of the remarkable circumstances which I have just adduced. We have been furnished with many striking contrasts between the number of representatives returned by the great manufacturing towns in South Lancashire, and by the smaller boroughs in the south of England; but no Parliamentary reformer has yet condescended to favour the House with the results of a more extended research, which would at least have allowed us to bring to the discussion of this subject more extensive views, and perhaps a more temperate spirit.

I will now refer to that favoured region, any mention of which is so considerately received in this House, and whose fortunes, commercial, financial, Parliamentary, and political, are not only the subject of so many discussions in the House of Commons, but are themselves the source of so many local leagues, confederacies and associations. The people of this part of our country are celebrated for their powers of statistical analysis. They publish tracts, they circulate myriads of pamphlets, they enquire into everything, even as to the profits that colonels of regiments gain by clothing their soldiers.

The most minute details are not beneath their careful investigation, and yet it is somewhat strange they have never called the attention of the people to some facts which I am now about to lay before the House. Here is the case of North Lancashire. There are four considerable towns in North Lancashire—Blackburn, Clitheroe, Lancaster and Preston. The population of North Lancashire is upwards of 460,000. These four towns out of that only take 143,000, leaving for the county constituency a population of 316,000. The four towns return seven Members, and the county constituency returns only two Members. I will now take the case of South Lancashire. It has a population of 1,500,000 under the new census. I will take all the towns, the noblest seats of manufacturing and commercial industry —Ashton, Bolton, Bury, Liverpool, Manchester, Oldham, Rochdale, Salford, Warrington, Wigan. The population of these boroughs is 1,000,000, being two-thirds of the whole population of the county, and the remaining third consists of the rural population. Yet the million of manufacturing and commercial population in this proud county of South Lancashire are represented in this territorial House of Commons by fifteen Members; while the rural population, which is half as great, is represented by only two Members. I am sure the House, having heard such long, frequent, and repeated complaints of the injustice done to the population of the towns, and of the improper preponderance given to the landed interest, will not feel I am abusing their patience by these details. I will therefore take next the county of East Norfolk, in which there are two great towns. East Norfolk has a population of 250,000. Norwich and Yarmouth have a population of less than 100,000. Yet the 99,000

persons of the manufacturing town and the seaport are represented by four Members, while the agricultural population of East Norfolk, nearly double in amount, is only represented by two Members. I now approach Yorkshire, and that is the last county I will quote. I will first begin with East Yorkshire. The East Riding has a population of 220,000, and contains two towns, one, Hull, a port of great importance. The town population of the East Riding is 94,000, represented by four Members. The rural population, 126,000, is represented by only half that amount. The West Riding remains; and if I were to seek an instance to show that the distribution of the representation of the people is not made with any desire to promote or maintain the preponderance of the landed interest, I should seek it in that West Riding which is so frequently referred to in our discussions. There are nine considerable towns in the West Riding—Leeds, Sheffield, Bradford, Halifax, Huddersfield, Wakefield, and others. The entire population of the West Riding is 1,300,000. The town population is about 500,000, and the county population 800,000. The town population are represented by sixteen Members, although they are only 500,000 in number, while the county population of 800,000 are represented, not by sixteen Members, but by two. This is the result of what I have just stated. In South Lancashire, among the town population, every 70,000 persons have a representative, and every 257,000 of the county population have a representative. In the West Riding of Yorkshire every 32,000 of the population of the towns have a Member, and every 400,000 of the county population have a similar advantage.

I know it may be said—and if I do not answer the

objection by anticipation, I know it will be said—'You have made out a very good colourable case in favour of your views; but you have selected five or six important but partial instances.' Sir, I have anticipated that objection, and I have tested this important matter in another manner, which, I think, must be admitted to be a fair mode. Here I have a catalogue of every town in England which has a population of not less than 20,000. There are 77 towns in this list, beginning with Ashton-under-Lyne, and ending with York, with populations, many of them, of course, much exceeding 20,000. They are almost all of them seats of commerce and manufacturing industry, and they include a population of 6,266,000, which is represented by 138 Members. But there are several towns which do not possess populations of 20,000, but which are considerable places as seats of commerce, and which ought to be inserted in any list of the kind, such as Gloucester, Lynn Regis, Kidderminster, and Rochester. I have added about 30 of these boroughs to the 77 towns, all of which have a population of 20,000, and some of them a population infinitely greater. The population of these 107 towns is more than 6,660,000, represented by 187 Members. If we divide the remaining portion of the community among the remaining Members of Parliament, the result will be just this : that the population of these towns have 35,000 persons to every representative in this House, and that the population of the rest of England have 36,000 for every representative. So that, taking this complete and comprehensive view, when you come to a fair distribution of the representation between the country and the town population, the advantage, though not very considerable, is absolutely on the side of the

towns; and in both instances, in the case of the urban and the rural population, you have a less number of persons represented by each Member than has been laid down, as perfect representation, in the pamphlet quoted by the seconder of the hon. Gentleman's Motion. Whether you look to the town or country population, they are absolutely more amply represented in this House than is enforced in the pamphlet that has been alluded to as the proper and perfect exemplar and type of representation.

Having examined this subject so far, I must confess I have arrived at a different conclusion from that of my hon. Friend the Member for Montrose. I think that his statistics, and the statistics of his school, are founded upon partial instances, and supported by fantastic combinations, which are calculated to convey to the country erroneous impressions—impressions not at all justified even by his own data. All the data upon which he has relied appear to me illusory; and as the facts to which I have appealed are open to all, and may be found in the books in the library of this House, and in other equally accessible and authentic documents, I shall be surprised indeed to find my hon. Friend maintaining his position, that in the distribution of the representation the town population, as contradistinguished from and compared with that of the country, has not been fairly and justly treated in our present electoral system. It appears to me, Sir, that this is a position that can no longer be supported.

Passing, then, to the next proposition, my hon. Friend asks us to sanction the principle, that the duration of Parliament ought not to exceed three years. Sir, I have no inveterate prejudice to shorter Parliaments. I have often said in this House that triennial Parliaments were

always supported by the Tory party. That statement has been received with scoffing by hon. Gentlemen opposite, who do not condescend to pay much regard to any other portion of history than that in which they perform such distinguished parts. But there is no doubt that the change in our manners which has taken place since the period when triennial Parliaments prevailed, and which has increased the business transacted in the House of Commons, is an element that must be taken into consideration when you wish to ascertain the proper duration of Parliaments. But, remembering what has happened here during the last fortnight, and remembering their language during the present Session, I am filled with astonishment to hear reformers and liberals come forward in favour of triennial Parliaments. What have they told us this year? One member of the present Government is very anxious to bring forward a measure which he and others, my colleagues, consider of the utmost importance for the security and good government of the realm with as little delay as possible. We are, moreover, desirous of bringing in other measures, which we consider to be almost equally urgent, and which we therefore wish should pass into law without loss of time. But what are we told by these liberal and reforming gentlemen? 'Why, you are bringing forward a measure in the last year of a Parliament! You would legislate in a condemned Parliament! It can't be heard of. You ought to counsel the Sovereign to prorogue and dissolve the Parliament as soon as possible, and to call a new one; to legislate or attempt to legislate in the last year of a Parliament is so much time lost.' But if the last year of a Parliament is thus condemned, we should have practically, if my hon.

Friend's proposition were adopted, biennial Parliaments; and if the old and favourite scheme of annual Parliaments were again put forward and adopted, we should commence with condemned Parliaments, and the Commons of England could never presume to legislate, because they would cease to exist in the very year they met.

The third proposition of my hon. friend is the recommendation of the vote by ballot. Now, Sir, I have always been of opinion that the manner of taking the vote can never be considered abstractedly; it must always be considered in relation to the nature of the vote you have to take. If you have to take a very large number of votes, or if you have, on the contrary, to take a very small number, the method by which they are taken, though the same, may assume in either instance a very different character. I believe, that with a limited constituency, the ballot may be a very conservative measure; but are hon. gentlemen prepared to accept the ballot on this condition? Well, I will assume that they are not prepared so to accept it, and that they would not recommend vote by ballot with the present constituency. ['No!'] You are not. [*Cries of* 'Yes!' *from an Opposition Member.*] You are, then? I have heard to-night something about an oligarchy; but I never heard of a more cunning device to establish an oligarchy of the most oppressive character than to invest a limited number of persons with the suffrage, and then to guard them in its exercise from inspection, from criticism, and control on the part of the unenfranchised millions about whom we have heard so much to-night, and on so many other occasions. No, I do not believe, from the speeches of my hon. Friend the member for

Montrose, and his friends on that side of the House—I will not do them the injustice of believing—that they sincerely desire to invest what they style the present limited constituencies of the kingdom with the irresponsibility conferred by voting by ballot. They have always argued that the extension of the franchise is a preliminary to the adoption of the ballot, and I am sure they do not intend to gainsay that opinion now. But the line must be drawn somewhere, unless that extension of the franchise be universal. Where shall it be drawn? If you say, 'I do not want to draw a line anywhere'—if you tell us, as my hon. Friend the member for Montrose told the House he did last Session—namely, submitted to modify his own views in deference to those of other persons, with the purpose of obtaining their assistance—if you adopt what is called in common parlance universal suffrage—without which, so far as political justice is concerned, I do not see how you can establish the ballot, because, if you have the ballot with a limited constituency, you commit a greater injustice upon the unenfranchised classes; but if you have universal suffrage you come to a new constitution, a constitution commonly called the Sovereignty of the People; you come to that constitution, in short, so much spoken of, so often panegyrised by the reforming and liberal members of this House—the constitution of America. But the sovereignty of the people is not the constitution of England; for wisely modified as that monarchy may be, the constitution of England is the Sovereignty of Queen Victoria.

But, then, it is said by the hon. Member for Montrose, you must terminate the bribery and corruption which prevail among the constituencies, and all your

fine-spun arguments will not do unless you effect this object. Now, I beg the attention of the House, and my hon. friend in particular, to some extracts from a correspondence which I have this moment received. There is an authority that he will respect, because it is a transatlantic authority, and proceeds from a country where the people enjoy universal suffrage and vote by ballot. It is a message from the Governor of the State of New York, in North America, to the Legislature of that State; it illustrates the operation of the vote by ballot and universal suffrage: 'Gentlemen,' the Message says, 'an alarming increase of bribery has taken place in the popular elections for this State—' This, be it remembered, is the Address of the Chief of the State of New York to the Legislature of that State, in a country which has been set up by my hon. Friend as a precedent for us—a country where universal suffrage prevails, and that which the hon. Gentleman the Member for Sheffield calls self-government; and here is the manner in which the chief of the self-governed addresses the Legislature of no less a State than New York, when it last assembled: 'An alarming increase of bribery has taken place in the popular elections for this State, which demands the serious attention of the Legislature.' We find, therefore, that in New York, where the ballot is in full force, that the head of the State calls on the Legislature to interfere for the suppression of bribery, stating that it demands, moreover, their most serious attention. I will quote some further extracts from the same letter from which I have read this passage. I will not mention the name of the writer, because I am about to quote only facts, not opinions. He was once a member of this House, and has since filled the most important

posts in the service of our Sovereign. Were I to state his name, it would, I am sure, be received by Gentlemen on both sides with universal respect.* You now know that bribery is not prevented by the ballot, and you will find that it does not prevent something else. This is the way persons were treated at the last election :—

Individuals were not merely beaten from the polls, but they were knocked down, beaten, and stabbed when proceeding about their ordinary occupations in open day in distant parts of the city. The police appeared to have been utterly inefficient, and the 100,000 citizen soldiers, of whom the New York papers boasted so much, were content to remain at home while a few gangs of ruffians commanded all the approaches to the polling-booths, and in one instance—destroyed the ballot-box.

I find no fault with my hon. friend and others for recommending the adoption of a new mode of voting in this country. This is the land of free discussion, and every one is at liberty to recommend what he thinks best; but what I do say is this, that it is remarkable that in dealing with the instance of the ballot, as in dealing with the instance of the proposed new distribution of electoral power, the facts on one side only are stated by hon. Gentlemen—only a one-sided view is brought before us, and only one class of considerations is urged upon our attention. I resume the narrative from the destruction of the ballot-box.

This last outrage upon the freedom of election has very naturally caused extreme irritation, and *The Courier and Enquirer* says, that brutes must be met by brute force; while *The Tribune* is still more plain spoken. He says, 'that the scoundrels who thus trampled upon the highest privilege that a free man can enjoy, should have been shot like dogs by the freemen whom their hireling souls thus villanously insulted.'

* The late Earl of Elgin, who was for a short time a Member of the House of Commons, when Lord Bruce.

Now, I beg my hon. Friend to observe that while, by the confession of no less a personage than the Governor of the great State of New York, the ballot does not prevent bribery and corruption at elections, it appears likewise perfectly inefficient for the prevention of scenes of horrible intimidation, such as we cannot even conceive in this country, men being beaten and stabbed at the polling booth. My correspondent, for whom I know my hon. Friend entertains personally the highest consideration, gives some further information respecting the influence of the ballot—and I must confess that what I am about to quote is really humiliating. 'We understand that the Whig Committee of the 8th Ward' —I ought in justice to remind the House of what it is no doubt already aware, that the Whig party in America is not identical with the party in this country of which the noble Lord opposite is the distinguished chief and the hereditary ornament:—

> We understand that the Whig Committee of the 8th Ward and other Wards have offered 100 dollars to every man who can secure 20 democratic votes for the Whig tickets on election day. This money has been partially raised by the most shameful extortions from the office-holders of the Whig party. It is said that every policeman in the Whig districts has been taxed 15 dollars towards defraying the expenses of the election. By this means the Whigs seek to crush every independent feeling in the voter, and to make him the mere tool of party. With the money procured in this manner, political hacks are sent to buy up the votes of the poorer and yet more dependent classes in those wards.

This system of bribery is of course intolerable to all rightminded men, and I only mention it now that my hon. Friend the Member for Montrose may exercise his great and deserved influence on the other side the Atlantic, to repress the infamous conduct of those who

would bribe democratic votes to the Whig ticket. All this iniquity is practised under the operation of that very system which my hon. Friend says is the only means of preventing bribery, and which the hon. Member for Bristol (Mr. F. H. Berkeley) would persuade us to adopt as an infallible mode of suppressing intimidation. I must quote one paragraph more, because it proceeds from legislative authority. My hon. Friend the Member for Montrose and the hon. and learned Member for Sheffield have told the House that the ballot is the only mode for preventing bribery. In the experience of New York, at least, the ballot has been proved inefficient for the purpose of preventing bribery at elections; and the following preamble and resolution have just been presented to the Assembly:—

Whereas the use of money at elections, for the purpose of influencing and corrupting electors, is an increasing and dangerous evil, and the bestowment or offer, promise or reception of money, or compensation in any form, should be made good and sufficient grounds for the challenge and rejection of a vote; but, whereas doubts exist as to the constitutionality of a law disfranchising an elector, therefore, resolved, 'That the Committee on the Judiciary Acts be and are hereby requested to examine and report whether, in their opinion, a law conformable to the foregoing preamble would be a violation of any provision of the constitution at law of this State.'

Mr. HUME: What law? What proposition?

THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER: A proposition made to the Legislature of New York to take the increase of bribery in the elections for that State into consideration, in order to repress it by law. I mention this to prove that the corruption at elections in the United States—at least in the State of New York, where the vote by ballot prevails—is regarded as an intolerable grievance. On the eve of

a general election, when we are called upon to pass a law to repress bribery, which has too long prevailed, do not let the country at large run away with the idea that this corruption is a consequence of the old method of giving our votes. I believe it is a growing conviction among Englishmen that corruption is the consequence, not of one form of voting or of another, but of men being properly or improperly brought up. You may pass laws ostensibly to prevent corruption in countries where voting is secret, as well as in countries where voting is open; but corruption cannot be stopped by Acts of Parliament; it can only be stopped by elevating the tone of the community, and making men ashamed of the thing itself. You must seek for an antidote to corruption in that direction, and not in newfangled systems of election. I say, further, that the tone of the community in which we live has become more elevated in this respect. Every successive quarter of a century shows an improvement. No man who knows anything of the tone of public life a hundred years ago, can hesitate to admit that corruption then ascended much higher in society than it does at present. You have driven corruption from the higher classes. In proportion as education and opinion extended among the gentry, men became purer; and when the same influences come into equal operation among the humbler classes, it will be recognised that it is for the interest of all classes that bribery should disappear.

There is one point more to which I will, with the permission of the House, briefly allude. I have noticed what I conceive to be my hon. Friend's total failure to prove his proposition, that the distribution of representatives is not consistent with the different

classes of population. I think I have shown that nothing can be more erroneous than the opinion so prevalent in a portion of this House and the country, that the landed interest possesses an undue preponderance in this House. I think I have also shown by reference to figures bearing official sanction, and which are open to everybody, that it is almost impossible to distribute the electoral power more justly than is done at present between the two great classes which represent town and country. I also venture to think that I have offered my hon. Friend some reasons for doubting whether as much corruption and intimidation may not prevail under a system of secret voting as we have ever experienced under the system which exists in this country. I have further given some reasons for supposing that my hon. Friend and those about him may hesitate, with their present constitutional doctrines, to recommend short Parliaments. There is yet one of his propositions which I ought to notice, and that is the general proposition that the franchise ought to be very much extended; and on this I have one observation to make. Viewing this question, and viewing it I trust with perfect impartiality, I have been much struck by the great exaggeration which pervades the statements made by the hon. Gentleman and his friends. I remember towards the close of the last Session to have heard a distinguished Member of this House—one who, on subjects of this kind especially, is in the habit of addressing it with great ability, and with sufficient confidence in his cause and himself—I mean the hon. Member for Manchester (Mr. Bright)—I remember having heard him ask this question—'Is the system to be endured in which only one in seven of the adult population of this

country enjoys the franchise?' I remember also the tumultuous cheering which immediately followed that indignant exclamation. ['Hear.'] Ay; I say so. You cheered the sentiment then, and you cheer it now. Is it true that only one adult male in seven of the population of this country enjoys the franchise? Here are the figures, let us examine them. This paper is prepared from the Census of 1841, because the analysis of classes under the new census is not yet published. I have compared the population of 1841 with the electoral return of 1842-3, and there is no reason to believe that there is any material difference between the proportions of the existing constituency and the adult male population of the last Census, the gross amount of which we know. The return is confined to Great Britain. The electors for Great Britain, in 1842-3, were 941,782, and the number of the adult male population was, in 1841, 4,961,045, which gives, instead of one voter in seven, one voter in five, omitting fractions. But from the 4,961,045 adult males some deductions must be made, which the hon. Member himself would make. For the army and navy abroad and in Ireland, and for the navy and merchant seamen afloat—for I have never heard that the hon. Gentleman proposed to give them a vote—I deduct 169,650, which leaves the adult male population at 4,791,395. Then I deduct 35,000 for the army at home, 111,699 for the navy and merchant seamen ashore, 74,149 for almspeople, pensioners, paupers, lunatics and prisoners, and 164,384 for domestic servants, who are always excepted from any scheme of reform I ever heard in this House. Then I must deduct the residue of the population who have no homes at all, to the number of 276,526; and that will reduce the adult population

on whose behalf any claim to the franchise can be urged, to little more than 4,129,566. Thus, instead of one in seven, it is, by the figures on our table in official returns, actually one in four. But I must go further. These bold statements of—I will not call them demagogues, after the complaint to-night of the hon. Member for Montrose—but the bold statements of hon. Gentlemen having dwindled down to this, that I have got an adult population of 4,129,566, which, as regards the electoral body, gives one in four—I ask what am I to do with the agricultural and urban labourers? I have not yet heard that the hon. Gentleman and his friends, while they complain that only one in seven have the exercise of the franchise, have any wish, under any system, to give a vote to the 1,435,412 peasantry and artizans spread over this country. I never heard one bold assertion of that kind. Well, then, if I deduct these labourers from 4,129,566, I have remaining only an adult male population of 2,694,154, which, as regards the electoral body, is one in two and a fraction of 86, or nearly one in three. But what a difference from the statements we have always heard on this subject! What a difference from the statements made at Manchester and at Leeds! From those of reform associations at Liverpool or anywhere else! What a difference from the statements made in pamphlets! What a difference from the statements of those erratic orators who, during the recess, have astonished the world! Why, instead of one in seven, it is absolutely little more than half what you say, even including 1,500,000 of labourers, whom not one of you have unequivocally proposed to enfranchise.

It appears to me, then, that the propositions before

the House are crude, that they do not bring with them proof of investigation, are not in accordance with facts, and do not indicate that degree of research which the House has a right to expect in all matters of this kind, and more especially from gentlemen who have devoted a long life to such subjects. It appears to me that they are based on statistical errors more flagrant than their political blunders, and that we cannot, whatever may be our opinion of the policy recommended, approve of it, founded as it is on such erroneous and imperfect data.

I am not one of those who think, that because I disapprove of a proposition brought forward in this immature manner, I am bound to oppose every proposition brought forward to remedy grievances connected with the representation of the Commons. There has been very free criticism on the other side by the new supporters of the noble Lord the Member for London, of the measure which he proposed when he was First Minister of the Crown. I think a sense of decency, if nothing else, should have led those Gentlemen to abstain from that unfriendly course. Why they should for three or four hours have so severely criticised the withdrawn—I will not say the abandoned—proposition of the late Minister, I do not pretend to understand. Sitting on the same side of the House, meeting under the same roof, combining and counselling together for the same object, I should have thought that all these considerations would have prevented the slightest allusion to the subject, and that they would have brought forward their own proposition without obtruding their reflections on the measure of the noble Lord, with regard to which we, on this side, have always shown the most respectful silence. I should have thought that Gentlemen op-

posite would have considered the privilege they enjoy in being led by a high constitutional statesman on the one hand, and the privilege they have on the other of bringing forward revolutionary recommendations and plans, and that they would not have deemed it their duty to enter during the whole evening, into a criticism of the late Government measure. We have had some allusions made to a declaration on the subject of Parliamentary reform, said to have emanated from a noble Earl, the present head of the Government; but I protest against conclusions drawn from mere anonymous paragraphs in newspapers. I say at once for myself and my Colleagues that we do not consider an extension of the franchise to be synonymous with the extension of democratic power. That much-abused Reform Bill, which no one has so much loaded with praise, to which no one once testified so much devotion as the hon. Member for Montrose—where would that Bill have been, I ask, but for the spirit and energy of a Stanley? When I am told that we are opposed to all reform, I cannot but remember that the noble Lord who preceded me in the Parliamentary seat I now hold (the Marquis of Chandos)—that it was that individual who proposed a measure which added one-ninth to the constituency of Great Britain. I therefore entirely repudiate this convenient assertion of the hon. Gentleman and his friends, that we are a party opposed to all reform unless we listen to the propositions of the kind now before us. I will tell the hon. Gentleman what we are opposed to—we are adverse to all crude and unnecessary proposals founded on such erroneous calculations as the present. I tell him that if any project on this or any other subject is brought forward, I hope it will be founded on more accurate data than the one

before us. What we are opposed to is tampering with the depositary of political power—to constant shifting and changing of the depositary of political power—as the most injurious thing to a country that can be conceived. You may talk of tampering with the currency, and there are few things worse; but that which is worse is, tampering with the constituency of England. If there is to be a change, let it be a change called for by clear necessity, and one which is calculated to give general—I will not say final—but general and permanent satisfaction. I ask, is the proposition of the hon. Member for Montrose—the whole foundation of which I have shown to be utterly fallacious—is that a proposition calculated to give general and permanent satisfaction? The proposition of the noble Lord the head of the late Government, was that one calculated to give general and permanent satisfaction? The noble Lord is too candid a man not to confess that, whatever be its merits, it was not calculated to give that general and permanent satisfaction. The sense of the country and the House alike called upon him to withdraw it; and I am sure that there is not one who will say that if that proposition had been brought fairly under discussion, it would have received the concurrence of the House. We cannot sanction the proposition of the hon. Gentleman or his friends. And may we not flatter ourselves that after the debate of this night, he will reconsider these things—that he will investigate them—that he will calmly consider the important information from the other side of the Atlantic which I have given him—and that next year, with a health, spirit, and energy which I hope he will long enjoy, we may find him coming forward more temperate in his views, and more careful in his statements? Till we have pro-

positions of a different character brought forward, I shall stand by the settlement made in 1832; not because it was a settlement made for our party interests—for, on the contrary, it was levelled against those supposed interests; but the good sense of the country has exercised a remedial influence over the devices of rival factions, and under that settlement of 1832 the country has on the whole, in my opinion, been well governed. At any rate, it is not what is styled the Liberal party which should dispute that position. There is not a great question, which during the last twenty years has enlisted a preponderating amount of popular sympathy out of doors, which this House has not adopted and carried; and though I may think that in more than one instance great subjects have thus been dealt with in an unwise and precipitate spirit, that should be no cause of censure with hon. Gentlemen opposite. Until, therefore, they can succeed in showing that this country has of late years been generally misgoverned—and that would be a condemnation of their whole course—and until they are prepared to substitute for the existing House of Commons a far more clear and coherent scheme than any they have yet offered, I must uphold an arrangement, which, though conceived in no friendly spirit to the Tory party, is one which has not proved hostile to the national institutions—institutions which, I believe, to be necessary not only to the greatness of the country, but to the freedom of the people.

APRIL 27, 1852.

On Mr. Locke King's motion, 'That leave be given to bring in a Bill to make the Franchise and Procedure at Elections in the Counties of England and Wales the same as in the Boroughs, by giving the right of voting to all occupiers of tenements of the annual value of ten pounds; by limiting the time of taking the poll to one day; and by limiting the time of proceeding to election to eight days.

MR. HUME, LORD ROBERT GROSVENOR, and MR. BRIGHT supported the motion, which was opposed by LORD JOHN MANNERS and LORD JOHN RUSSELL.

THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER: Sir, I have been anxious to say a few words in this debate, as the noble Lord who has just addressed you seems to have greatly misapprehended what was said by my noble Friend (Lord J. Manners). I certainly did not understand my noble Friend to say that Her Majesty's Government was prepared to 'concur in any measure' for the reform of this House.

Lord JOHN RUSSELL: What I said was, that I understood the noble Lord the Member for Colchester to say, that the Government would concur in or take into their consideration a well-considered measure for reform.

THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER: Sir, I think it is evident that, to 'consider' and to 'concur' are two very different things. I should be sorry that any Government would be permitted to exist who was not prepared to consider a measure of such importance as affected the arrangement and construction of this House.

I have so recently addressed this House on the subject of Reform, that, even if the sacred hour of the evening was not at hand, I would hesitate to trespass again upon its attention. But I am induced to do so now in order that it may not be considered I am desirous of evading giving an opinion upon the question before us, in consequence of the peculiar circumstances of the present Session of Parliament.

I object to the measure proposed to be brought in by the hon. Member for East Surrey for various reasons: in the first place, because it is partial. I entirely agree with the noble Lord (Lord J. Russell) that the question of the representation of the community is one which must always be considered on an extensive scale. I entirely agree with the noble Lord that the lax system of Session after Session tampering with the Constitution, now of attempting to alter the constituencies of the towns, and then seeking to add to or adjust the constituencies of counties, would, in the end, evidently lead to some conclusion which cannot be satisfactory. Sir, I think that the question must be viewed on a much larger scale than that which is suggested by the proposition of the hon. Gentleman the Member for East Surrey. But I have also another objection to this Bill. I have often said to this House—I repeat it now, and it is the expression of a deep and sincere conviction on my part—that I think in the construction of that memorable law, the Reform Act of 1832, there was a very great deficiency—which consisted in a want of due consideration of the rights of the working classes to the franchise; and I own that I was very glad, on a recent occasion, to hear the noble Lord the author of that same Reform Act acknowledge that long observation had induced him to hold the same opinion—an

opinion which he certainly at one time did not consider with such favour. And if there be that great deficiency in our system of representation, I assuredly cannot understand how this measure, or the other measures on the same subject which have been so frequently proposed, are at all to meet the deficiency. Under our old system, by the suffrages of the freemen, the political rights of the labourer were acknowledged by the Constitution. We virtually destroyed those rights. I am aware, of course, that the rights of the then possessors were reserved. But the fountains which supplied that constituency were destroyed; and, in fact, we virtually terminated the political rights of labour with the class of freemen we destroyed. I do not for a moment wish now to maintain that there were not strong reasons why the existing arrangements should be interfered with; but, then, I never heard a reason why a more satisfactory arrangement could not have been substituted in lieu of the old one. I trace much of the discontent in this country, which at times has been painfully felt, with regard to the Reform Act of 1832, to the omission to which I have adverted. Well, then, Sir, what has been the remedy which has been offered by those who arrogate to themselves the sole privilege of representing and championing the rights of the working classes? They come forward and propose a large extension of the suffrage, virtually universal suffrage; their remedy is to throw the whole power of the country into the hands of a mere class. Instead of securing a constituency which gives to property all the rights of property, which gives to labour all the rights of labour, which cherishes, in short, the existence of those various classes, the recognition, the legal and political recognition, of whose interests has, I

believe, been one of the main causes of the flourishing condition of this country, and of the duration of its order, both social and political—they propose, as a remedy, a measure which essentially is a measure of class legislation, because they propose to give political authority to a class so numerous that they would overwhelm all other classes, and entirely change the Constitution of the country. To such a change I am opposed, as hurtful to the condition and character of the nation.

But then, Sir, that is no reason why we may not consider whether an industrial franchise may not be invented which would give satisfaction to those who claim to be represented in the legislation of the country. That is a question which deserves the grave consideration of any man responsible for the good government of the country. But is this omission in your Reform Act—the source of so much public discontent, and which some think may lead ultimately to public disorder—is it met by the measure proposed to be brought in by the hon. Member for East Surrey? On the contrary; for whilst some hon. Gentlemen acting with the hon. Member for East Surrey complain that property is even too much represented in existing constituencies, let us see what is the answer made to the claims of labour by the hon. Member and his school. The answer is, 'he will represent property still more.' That, at any rate, is the answer, in this Bill of the hon. Gentleman. Sir, I cannot myself sanction legislation so crude, and, as I believe, founded on such pernicious principles.

On the part of myself, and on the part of my Colleagues—I have said it before, and I repeat it now, in order that our opinions may not be misunderstood—I state that we do not necessarily associate an ex-

tension of the franchise with the extension of democratic power. If I could see any measure brought forward — well matured, conceived, not in political passion, but with a sincere desire of giving to deserving artisans the exercise of the suffrage in a manner consistent with the maintenance of those institutions the preservation of which I believe are as much for the interest of those artisans as they are for the interests of any other class of this country—I would give, and so would those with whom I act, to such a proposition a dispassionate and kind consideration. But, Sir, the Motion of the hon. Member for East Surrey is not of this class; and until some measure is brought which, as I think, meets the difficulties of the case, I must take my stand upon the settlement which exists—not from any superstitious reverence for that settlement, but because I am opposed to year after year tampering with the Constitution of the country—a tampering which I am convinced is the source of political weakness and of national debility. It is, I say, the interest of all men and of all parties who wish to continue the good government of the country, to maintain the existing order, unless they can bring forward propositions which, as regards the suffrage, may tend to give general satisfaction. I am willing to acknowledge that the Act of 1832 has in a great degree fulfilled those expectations; but I have expressed before the point in which I think that that arrangement was weak. I have had satisfaction in hearing the noble Lord (Lord J. Russell) himself acknowledge that he recognises the deficiency of which I have spoken. But I have not yet met from any person in this House any practical or sufficing mode by which the omission is to be supplied. If a proposition

of that kind were brought forward which really would meet the difficulty of the case, I would listen to such a proposition with the most respectful attention. Let no one suppose that there is, on the part of the present Government, any bigoted adherence to the forms now existing. The present Government have only one object, an object which I sincerely believe is the object of all the Members of this House, the good government of the country. But they desire to see the greatness of the Realm maintained, and the prosperity of the people secured. And if a change in the franchise is only proposed as a mode of obtaining political power, and of exciting political agitation, to such proposal we must give our unconditional and uncompromising opposition. I have too much respect for the hon. Member for East Surrey to describe his Motion as a measure of this kind. But I must nevertheless describe it as essentially unsatisfactory, not calculated in any degree to meet the exigency of the state of affairs; one which I can easily understand, if successful, may lead to much disturbance and readjustment, but which at the same time can conduce to no permanent or enduringly acceptable settlement; and, therefore, I must give to it—not because this is the last Session of the existing Parliament, but because I would take the same view under any other circumstances—an unqualified opposition.

MAY 10, 1852.

On moving, 'That leave be given to bring in a Bill to assign the Seats forfeited by the disfranchisement of the Boroughs of St. Albans and Sudbury.*

THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER: Sir, when, after re-election, I had the honour to resume my seat in this House, in answer to the interrogatories that were then addressed to me by an hon. Gentleman opposite, the Member for Wolverhampton (Mr. C. Villiers), as to the views of Her Majesty's Government with respect to their general policy, and as to the course which they intended to pursue, after giving the hon. Gentleman such explanations as were necessary with regard to the first point, I had to communicate to him the course which the Government intended to adopt with respect to the despatch of business before the House; and I stated then that, although it was the intention of Government humbly to counsel Her Majesty to dissolve the present Parliament, they were not prepared to give that advice until those measures should be passed which the exigency of the public service required, and some other measures were also carried which

* This measure was opposed and defeated by Mr. Gladstone, but was passed under Lord Palmerston's Government in 1861, with some alterations. Its provisions as to the West Riding of Yorkshire were left unchanged, but, instead of dividing South Lancashire, a third member was given to it, and the town of Birkenhead was enfranchised.

they deemed to be of paramount importance. Although on that occasion I did not absolutely define all the measures which under the circumstances Her Majesty's Ministers might think proper to submit to the consideration of the present Parliament—although the House was, indeed, too generous to demand a pledge so precise, and I hope that Her Majesty's Ministers were too discreet to enter into an engagement so precipitate—voluntarily and without disguise I did then, that being in the middle of the month of March, express to the House what were the intentions of Her Majesty's Government with respect to some measures which could not be described as coming within the category of those absolutely necessary for the supply of Her Majesty's service. I said then there were three measures that we deemed of paramount importance: one with respect to the internal defence of the country; another, a measure to carry into effect, if possible, those recommendations which were made for the reform of the Court of Chancery by Her Majesty's Commissioners; and, thirdly and lastly, I said that it was the intention of Her Majesty's Government, in case the Bill which was then before the House for the disfranchisement of the borough of St. Albans received the sanction of Parliament, to ask the House of Commons to assist in completing the constitutional number which had hitherto formed the aggregate of representatives in the House of Commons. Sir, I am unwilling at all times to quote to this House anything which I may have said in previous debates; and if this were merely an expression of sentiment or opinion, I should, I hope, have the good taste to refrain from doing so now. If, therefore, I may presume to refer to an authoritative statement of what then fell from me, it is only because I wish to

place before the House, in a manner the accuracy of which cannot be questioned, those details which are matter of fact. Sir, I find that what fell from me on that occasion is thus accurately represented. I said then—

I will mention, if the House will permit me, some measures which I think ought to be introduced without delay. I do not allude merely to those votes for the public service which every Member will, I am sure, join in granting to us; neither do I allude merely to the Mutiny Bill, which nobody, I believe, yet—although I have heard some strange rumours upon the subject—is prepared to oppose. But there are three other measures with regard to which, on the part of the Government, the greatest efforts will be made to secure their speedy passing. Those measures I shall feel it my duty, on the part of Her Majesty's Government, earnestly to press on the attention of the House. One of them is the disfranchisement of St. Albans, which has already been taken up by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State (Mr. Walpole). In connection with that measure, I beg to say that I shall take the earliest opportunity of expressing, on the part of the Government, what are their intentions with respect to the distribution of the four forfeited seats which we shall have to deal with if that Bill should receive the sanction of the House. That is a subject, in my opinion, of the greatest importance; it is, I think, highly expedient that, before Parliament is dissolved, the number of seats should be completed; and I trust that the proposal which the Government will have to make upon that subject will receive the general support of the House.*

Now, Sir, I must confess that I am surprised—I would almost presume to say that I am, individually, somewhat pained—to hear it insinuated, and more than insinuated, that in asking for leave to bring in a Bill for the purpose which is on the paper to-night, I have taken the House by surprise—that I have committed—I will not say a breach of trust, though even that expression has met the eye—but that I have tampered

* 3 Hansard, cxix. 1061.

with the honourable understanding which subsists between the Government and the House. Sir, I am not conscious of having acted in this respect in any other than a perfectly clear and straightforward manner. The day after I heard that Her Majesty had given her assent to the Bill for the disfranchisement of the borough of St. Albans, in pursuance of the first declaration which I made to this House as a responsible Minister of the Crown, I gave notice of the intention which I hope to-night I may partly fulfil. Sir, I have made these observations because I wish to vindicate myself from a charge which has been so freely circulated, and I trust that the statement I have made will, whatever may be the opinion of the House on the main subject, exonerate me from any charge of not having behaved towards the House in this matter in that candid, open, and straightforward manner which it becomes us to pursue in the conduct of the public business.

Sir, it now becomes my duty to state that it is the opinion of Her Majesty's Government that it is highly expedient that those seats should be filled up before the dissolution of Parliament takes place. Sir, I am well aware that if any hon. Gentleman opposite were to ask me what was the magic in that particular number of 658, or why the completeness of our legislation should be questioned without the concurrence of that aggregate number of Members—if I were asked to define or describe the cabalistic charm of these numerals, I freely admit that I should find myself extremely perplexed; but if I were equally asked from the same quarter to prove and demonstrate why twelve should be the number fixed for that tribunal which is the most popular in this country, I think that my perplexity

would be not less considerable. It would be extremely difficult to show that twelve is a number more absolutely perfect for the administration of justice by such a tribunal as a jury, than an unequal number, such as thirteen; and arguments might be offered why this number should be increased, or why it should not be so considerable. Sir, the foundation of all these arrangements is prescription; prescription which consists of rules created by experience and sanctioned by custom. And, sir, we must remember that prescription is, after all, the most important element of order, of liberty, and of progress; and although I myself am not, I am sure, inclined to yield to that principle any superstitious adherence, I am still of opinion that the time is not arrived when prescription can be lightly treated by a House of Commons. The inconvenience and the injury of outraging such a principle is more easy to comprehend than it is to establish the peculiar arrangement in question. A violation of prescription is an element of disturbance—it leads to discontent—it offers a premium to extravagant projects—it invites men to immature schemes and hazardous suggestions; and were it for no other reason than this, I feel that it would be our duty to warn the House against that which has become a continuous and systematic deficiency in the aggregate numbers of the House of Commons. Deeply convinced, then, of the inconvenience and of the peril of indulging in this continuous and systematic deficiency in our numbers, Her Majesty's Ministers have felt it their duty to express this opinion to the House. In their view of the case, it is essentially one for the House of Commons to consider; in their view of the case it is the first duty of the House of Commons to fulfil; and if that be true, if it be for the House of Commons to

see that its numbers are complete, it necessarily follows that the fulfilment of that duty should fall upon those who happen to be the Ministers of the day; because from the system of conducting public business in this House, and from the liberal concession of the time of the House to the existing Administration, it is quite clear that no question of this kind could with convenience be carried but by those who, by the generous confidence of the House, as an existing Administration, have conceded to them that command over the time of the House which the Government always possesses.

Sir, if the Government were to follow their own inclinations—if they were to consult merely their own personal interests and convenience—I hardly know any subject which they would more freely avoid than the settlement of questions like the present. They are essentially invidious. In old days, whenever questions concerning the appropriation of vacant seats were introduced, party passions were necessarily excited. In a country where the Government is carried on by the machinery of political party, it is scarcely possible to offer a suggestion for a settlement of a question of the kind, without, of course, the imputation of political motives, and perhaps without the possibility of political bias. But, Sir, at the present day, a Ministry that attempts to recommend to the House measures for the settlement of such questions, has not merely to encounter the ancient and traditionary sentiments of opposite parties. Of late years another element has entered into the discussion of these subjects, which tends peculiarly to embitter feelings, to create jealousies, and to increase difficulties; and that is, the unhappy misunderstanding between town and country, which I, for one, notwithstanding all that has passed,

hope yet may be of shorter duration than some are disposed to believe. Well, then, these two considerations alone would have induced the Government, but for a paramount sense of duty, to have avoided interfering in the settlement of this question. Sir, I do remember that when, in the month of March, on the part of the present Administration, I expressed their intentions of introducing a measure on this subject, the right hon. Gentleman the Member for the University of Oxford (Mr. Gladstone) did on that occasion express his dissent from the sentiments I then conveyed to the House. I will do him the justice to acknowledge that. But allow me to remind the House of the circumstances under which that protest—that provisional protest—was offered by the right hon. Gentleman. The right hon. Gentleman was then labouring under a conviction, or a fear, that Her Majesty's Ministers wished to avoid a dissolution of the present Parliament, or, at least, that they wished to postpone that appeal to the people to a much later period than had ever entered into the imagination of Her Majesty's Ministers. Such was the feeling entertained by the right hon. Gentleman, and it was avowedly upon that impression that the right hon. Gentleman founded his objection to the course I am now taking.

But, Sir, there is now no apprehension in the mind of any Member of this House that the dissolution of Parliament can be postponed, or that any one wishes to postpone it. On the contrary, the only expressions of regret at the impending dissolution which have reached me have not been uttered, I must say, by Gentlemen who do the present Administration the honour of supporting them. Sir, the moment that a pledge was given that the new Parliament should meet in the present year, it

was quite clear that it would not be the interest of Her Majesty's Ministers to postpone the dissolution of the existing Parliament; because, if Her Majesty's Ministers have to meet the new Parliament in this year, the natural desire which men with such responsible duties must have of obtaining at least sufficient time to prepare the measures which they may have to submit to the new Parliament, must make it, of all men, the interest of Ministers not to shrink from as speedy an appeal as possible to the constituencies. Therefore, the objection which the right hon. Gentleman raised to my bringing forward a measure of the kind I am now asking leave to introduce, namely, that it would tend to the postponement and procrastination of the dissolution, can no longer, I think, be urged, or enter into the mind of any Member, or in the present case influence in any degree his conduct. It is, then, not with any intention to influence the duration of this Parliament—which I think all must acknowledge who candidly consider the circumstances—but because we consider it to be of paramount importance that the constitutional number of Members of this House should be complete, and because we think, that of all times when that completion should take place, it is previous to a dissolution, we have felt it our duty, however unwillingly, to ask the leave of the House to bring in a Bill for the fulfilment of that object. Sir, the fact that a dissolution is impending, instead of being a reason against the House coming to some decision on the subject, appears to me, on the contrary, the strongest argument in favour of the course we are pursuing. If there are persons who are not represented, and who ought to be represented, what time more apposite for investing them with their legitimate privilege than

when we are about to give the country at large the opportunity of exercising the franchise; and if it be the opinion of the House that there ought to be four more Members of Parliament than there are here at present, what time more fitting for supplying the deficiency than when you will be in a position constitutionally to call them together for the fulfilment of their duties?

Sir, the very sense of the great inconveniences which have arisen in all discussions of this kind, from that unfortunate jealousy which exists between town and country, to which I have before alluded—the very feeling that it is highly impolitic on all occasions to be marshalling the rival claims of different parts of the community as regards their population or their property—has, I think, given rise to an anxiety in a very considerable portion of the country to see whether other elements wherewith to form a constituency may not be devised than those which have hitherto supplied elements of the electoral body. Sir, I have seen many plans which, if they were carried into effect, would send Members to Parliament by means, I think, entitled in every way to our respect, but other than those which are generally had recourse to. To-night, for instance, before I rose to address you, Sir, the hon. Member for Maldon (Mr. Lennard) gave notice, that if I succeeded in going into Committee with the Bill for which I now apply, he should propose that two of the Members for the vacant seats should be apportioned to the University of London. Sir, I believe that in making that suggestion the hon. Gentleman spoke in unison with the feelings of considerable classes entitled, I repeat it, in every way to the respectful consideration of this House; and I can truly say that that propo-

sition has not been viewed by Her Majesty's Ministers with any sort of prejudice: it has, on the contrary, been observed with interest and with sympathy.

Sir, I can admire the idea that would permit science and learning, by the immediate exercise of the popular suffrage, to take their place in this House, without the embarrassment of political connection, and without the inconveniences of party passions. But when this question is examined—and with the permission of the House I will slightly touch upon it—the difficulties, though I am far from saying that the House could not remove them—the difficulties are not inconsiderable. In all those suggestions which would lay down as a principle that the elements of our constituent body should be of a less absolutely material character than heretofore—that the intellectual and the moral qualities should be permitted to exercise their influence on this House without a necessary connection with political party—in all those suggestions there is something so plausible to the reason, and, I would add, even so captivating to the imagination, that I can easily understand that they have excited a great public interest, and engaged the approbation of many individuals who are entitled to the highest respect. Now, Sir, suggestions have been made, for example, that it would be desirable that the learned societies for which this metropolis is celebrated should furnish a Member or Members to this House; and, at the first glance, remembering who would probably be among the Members thus deputed to this House, it must be admitted to be a proposition highly deserving of our examination. Take the Royal Society, for example. It is a very ancient society. It was founded by a monarch. It has been adorned from the days of Sir Isaac Newton

by some of the greatest men whom England has produced. And at this moment it counts among its members some of our fellow-subjects of whom we are most proud. But the House must remember this, when we talk of the learned societies, that in the nineteenth century learned societies no longer necessarily consist of learned men. The necessity of having a large revenue, and of raising that revenue by public subscriptions, permits a great number of individuals to be numbered among learned societies who have no other claim to that distinction than that which is conferred by their wealth and the general respectability of their character. You would not necessarily, therefore, because you delegated the privilege of sending a Member or Members to Parliament to the learned societies, have a constituency formed of learned men.

Another difficulty in the case is to draw the line, if once you admit a principle so fluctuating in its elements. If the Royal Society—I take that as the oldest and the most distinguished among them all—is entitled to have a representative in this House on the ground that that society itself is a representative of science, there are many other societies who may also assume to represent science. Why, if you admit the Royal Society, on what principle can you shut out the Geographical Society, or the Zoological Society, or the Astronomical Society? And if you were to take all these societies, and say that by aggregating them together we should form a considerable constituency to whom collectively should be given a representative in Parliament, what will prevent new geographical societies, new zoological societies, and new astronomical societies being formed to-morrow, who might urge their claim to the possession of the franchise on the same plea? In fact it is

evident—I say it with great respect to those societies —in fact it is evident that, dealing with the materials before us, it would be in the power of any body of men—any club, for example—to give themselves a scientific designation, to affect scientific pursuits, and to make that a claim for the exercise of the franchise. Well, then, Sir, on examining the claims of the learned societies to this privilege, I feel that the difficulties are too great for us to overcome, and we have, therefore, reluctantly dismissed them from consideration.

It has been suggested, again, that there are Royal Corporations of great consideration in this country—Royal Colleges of Surgeons and of Physicians, a Royal Academy of Arts, and other similar institutions that might be grouped together for the purpose of Parliamentary representation. Sir, I have no wish in any way to impugn the conduct of those corporations, or to trench in any degree on their privileges; but if we examine into the constitution of those societies we shall find that, generally speaking, they are self-elected; and though the influence of their career and the result of their operation may be satisfactory to the country, I do not think it would be judicious, nor indeed very constitutional, that we should look for the elements of a representation amongst self-elected corporations.

Well, Sir, to come to the claim which has been partially advocated to-night by the notice of the hon. Member for Maldon—the claim of the Universities which are not represented. Now that appears at the first blush to be an extremely plausible plea. The ancient Universities of England are represented—the University of Dublin is represented—why then, for example, should not the Scotch Universities be represented? But any one who has investigated the

question, who has looked into the condition of the Scotch Universities, with every wish to recommend such a measure to the House—and it was my own wish—will find that the elements of a popular constituency are totally wanting; that in the Scotch Universities, for instance, there is no body like the Convocation of our English Universities; that you have students who never, or rarely ever, become graduates; that there is no privilege annexed in Scotland to the taking out of an academic degree, and that therefore it is seldom that any individual takes a degree. If, then, you invested the united Universities of Scotland with the privilege of being represented in this House, the privilege would, in fact, be in possession of a few rectors, and about a hundred professors. The elements of a popular constituency are altogether wanting. Well, so much for the learned societies, and so far for the Scottish Universities.*

But I have now to notice the claim of the London University. My colleagues and myself have considered not only the case of the learned societies, and not only the case of the Scotch Universities, but also the claim of the London University; but I am bound to say, with every disposition to recommend such a measure as that which the hon. Gentleman has shown his favour to, we do not find, in the present state of the London University, the conditions which are necessary for making a concession under the circumstances of such a nature as this. The

* A measure was introduced and passed by the Government of Lord Derby in 1858, which remedied these deficiencies; chiefly by conferring on the graduates a considerable share in the administration of their respective universities. The result has been a large increase in the number of degrees taken.

constitution of that University is, at present, too immature, its development too imperfect, for urging any well-founded claim of the nature now in question. At the utmost a scattered constituency of a few hundreds only could be collected, and I must say that there appears to me to be others whose claims on the consideration of the House are stronger and more numerous than is at present the claim of the University of London. I think it right, however, to add, that in considering the claim of this institution, Her Majesty's Government have felt that the principle upon which it is urged is a principle entitled to respect and approbation; that there is nothing fantastic or unfitting in the claim; but that it is in perfect unison with principles which are already acted upon in this House, in the case of Oxford, of Cambridge, and of Dublin.

Sir, there has been another proposition made, which, I confess, has been urged with great power, and which possesses many causes why it should be entertained with the deepest consideration. We have been urged to recommend to the House to concede, at least, one Member to the Inns of Court. Sir, the four Inns of Court would, no doubt, afford a considerable and most respectable constituency—a constituency of some thousands arising from corporations that have existed from immemorial ages, that have taken a distinguished part in the history of this country, and which have sent to this House some of its most eminent Members. We did think that it was no objection to this plan, that an eminent lawyer, by the confidence of the Inns of Court, might find his way into this House without the taint of political or party connection. We thought that, in an age favourable to legal reform, for example, it was very possible that the appreciation of his fellow-lawyers

might select some student who might otherwise shrink from the coarser collisions of public life on the hustings, and yet might take his place in the House of Commons as the representative of a constituency of some thousands of honourable and learned men, and afford by his erudition and his counsel a very great assistance to the deliberations of this House. But, Sir, after giving to the question the most deliberate and the most anxious consideration we found it impossible to avoid the conclusion that it would be a hopeless task to propose to the House of Commons the allocation of one or two Members to the Inns of Court, unless we were prepared to concede the same privilege to other similar constituencies. I know there is a prejudice—which I do not share—against the too considerable appearance of lawyers in this House. I beg to say, Sir, that I do not share it, because I remember how much of our liberty is owing to our law, and is founded upon our law, and that in the most critical periods of our history, lawyers have been the most eminent and fearless champions of the rights of the people of England. I confess I am surprised, therefore, at the existence of a prejudice such as this, to which, however, I must, most reluctantly, yield. It is one I have always deplored, one which I can never cease to lament, when I recollect that lawyers have been, not only the great assertors of English liberties, but also the greatest ornaments of the House of Commons; when I remember that Sir Edward Coke and Lord Bacon both sat in this House; when I remember that the revered names of Selden and of Somers both belong to the House of Commons; that in an after age this House resounded with the golden eloquence of Mansfield, and was once adorned by the majestic virtues of Romilly;

and that it is our happiness to remember that amongst our Members the esteemed descendants of some of those great men are still to be found. But though I cannot agree in a prejudice which I think unwarranted by facts, I feel it would not do for Her Majesty's Government to propose, unless the proposition were attended by some identical or analogous projects, to allot one or more of the four vacant seats to the Inns of Court; therefore, on the part of Her Majesty's Government, after careful consideration, and with the most ample desire to introduce constituencies founded upon these elements, and believing that they might contribute to the increased reputation of this assembly, I must renounce at present any attempt to form a constituency out of those interesting, but, I fear, impracticable, elements.

Under these circumstances, Sir, I have now to place before the House the results of the next step in the investigations by the Government on this subject, and the course which, on the whole, they think it best for the House to follow, in order to accomplish that which they deem one of the highest duties of the House—namely, the completion of its constitutional numbers previous to the impending dissolution. In considering where we should seek for the elements of a new constituency to which to confide the possession of one of the noblest privileges that a freeman can exercise, we have had to regard the relative claims of the different portions of the community; for very much depends on the relative degree of representation which they at present enjoy, and we have thought that the relative degree of representation could scarcely be more fairly tested than by ascertaining the numbers of existing constituencies and the numerical strength of the popula-

tions by which they are, as it were, fed, supplied, and sustained. And in looking over the different constituencies of this country, guided by this principle, there is one the claims of which seem to Her Majesty's Government to be paramount, and that is the constituency of the West Riding of Yorkshire. Her Majesty's Government propose to recommend to the House that two of these seats should be apportioned to the West Riding of Yorkshire. The constituency of the West Riding of Yorkshire is, as hon. Gentlemen are aware, about 37,000. Generally speaking, the representation of the county has been, so far as the great material interests are concerned, neutralised, in the opinions of its Members, in this House. The agricultural and manufacturing interests have generally sent Members for this Riding of such opposite opinions in reference to these great interests, that they have sustained a nicely-balanced power upon the important subjects connected with these interests. But on remarkable occasions, when popular feeling has been much excited, that has happened which is not unusual under such circumstances—namely, although the parties in this great district are nicely balanced, popular opinion has just given the deciding impulse to the election, and two Members of the same opinion have been sent here as representatives—as in 1841, for example—and almost a moiety of this great constituency has been practically disfranchised. Sir, such being the case, if the two Members were to be given without providing for these difficulties, it is very probable that the same result would frequently occur under similar circumstances, and you would have four Members returned for the county by a very small casting majority, and of the same opinions; as in 1841 you had two Mem-

bers returned to the House professing Conservative opinions, who were returned by a small majority. For instance, the constituency being 37,000, I think the two Conservative Members elected in 1841 were returned by a majority barely exceeding 1,000. On consideration of these facts Her Majesty's Government think the best course to recommend is, that the West Riding of Yorkshire should be divided. And if the House would permit me to lay before them the reasons which have induced us to recommend that course, and the method by which we propose to carry out this division in order to effect that object, I will at once proceed to do so.

Sir, when we had arrived at this conclusion of recommending to the House the division of the West Riding of Yorkshire into two districts, each of which should be represented by two Members, we supposed that that division might be effected by availing ourselves of what I may call the natural divisions, that is, the hundreds, or, as they are called in the West Riding, the wapentakes. There are ten wapentakes, and by a division of these we naturally thought that our object could be effected. But when we examine these divisions, we find that they present difficulties that are insurmountable. For example, one wapentake, or hundred, out of the ten, possesses at this moment more than one-third of the whole constituency. It was, therefore, found impossible to recommend such a division. There are other reasons to prevent such a division, which at the present moment I do not think it necessary to trouble the House by detailing. We found it thus impossible to effect a proper division by availing ourselves of the natural districts of the county. That being the case, we thought the difficulties might be overcome by establishing a divi-

sion of the West Riding by means of the polling-places. But as it is in the power of the justices in their court of quarter-sessions to change these districts at their will, the House will see that we were again baffled in effecting such an arrangement, because, although at the present moment they might form the basis of a proper arrangement, a division of this character would not afford us any permanent boundary. We, therefore, thought it impossible to effect our object by the present system of electoral divisions. In this state of affairs a suggestion was made to us to meet the difficulty; it is one which I observe has transpired—I do not regret it; but it has led to some of the most unfounded and ludicrous representations that have ever been circulated. It was represented to us that the county magistrates of the West Riding, for county purposes, at this very time and for some period back, finding the necessity of dividing the West Riding, have constructed a division of the Riding; and we were recommended to consider that division. It appears that they have not yet formally adopted this arrangement; but they have frequently discussed it among themselves, and it has been received with great favour by gentlemen of different opinions in the county. I have this plan now before me. It proposes to take the simple and intelligible boundary of the Midland Railway, which I think I can show to the House is one entitled to their consideration.

The Midland Railway enters the West Riding from the county of Derby; it then leads to Skipton; then turning towards Colne, it proceeds until it meets the boundary of the county of Lancaster. This division would thus affect the constituency. All that part of the county lying south and west of the line

we propose to call the southern division of the county; and all that part lying north and east we propose to call the northern division of the West Riding. Wherever a township intersects this line, we propose that it shall belong to the northern division, in order that no such township should be divided or overlooked in this arrangement. The effect on the constituency in each of these divisions as to numbers will then be this: the constituency of the northern division will amount to 17,965, and that of the southern division to 18,785. Now, Sir, I have considered with some attention a criticism that has met my eye, and which, I confess, in the liveliness of its remarks, reminded me of some observations which I have heard elsewhere. I find the great accusation brought against this proposition is founded upon this objection—that the northern division we have thus marked out is composed of an agricultural constituency. Now, I must say for myself—and I offer this as a remark rather than as an argument—if the 17,000 or 18,000 constituents in this division be composed of persons most interested in agriculture, I see no reason why they should not be represented in this House as well as any other constituency within the kingdom; nay, more, I cannot understand why an objection should be made to 17,900 persons forming a constituency in this northern division being represented by a person connected with the agricultural interest, any more than the 18,900 in the southern division being represented by a person intimately connected with manufactures. I really think that 17,000 or 18,000 independent electors in the county have a right to choose those Members they think most entitled to their confidence. But it should be observed that if this division have the

effect of making one portion of the West Riding almost purely agricultural—if that be true, in the same way we leave the other division, the southern division, entirely manufacturing; and, therefore, it might be equally objected to us that we take a contracted view of this question in reference to this latter division, for it might be said that by such an arrangement the hon. Member for the West Riding (Mr. Cobden) will be its representative for life; for we are giving him a constituency that is entirely devoted to him—in fact, that the hon. Member for the West Riding will be the representative of a constituency in which no element of opposition exists. Well, if the result of this arrangement be that the hon. Member for the West Riding shall have a permanent seat in this House, I cannot say that I shall regret it. I confess that I should be sorry to see the hon. Gentleman absent from this House. Where a man has the power of influencing public opinion, it is, in my mind, much better that he should be responsible for his conduct in an assembly like this, than that he should exercise his great talents in other scenes, independently of his responsibility as a Member of the British House of Commons.

But, Sir, in the map of the county magistrates which expresses their plan, I perceive that the division therein marked out is made in connection with a simple and intelligible line of railway, by which Leeds, although a manufacturing town, is thrown into the southern division. We propose to follow that intelligible line of railway, but to leave Leeds in its natural position—the northern division. I have seen that denounced as an arrangement which would prevent the manufacturing interest of Leeds exercising its fair and due authority in connection with

the interests of the southern division. Why, the southern division is entirely manufacturing; it, therefore, wants no assistance whatever from Leeds, and by allowing it to remain in the northern or agricultural division we shall be permitting the enterprise and energy of a great manufacturing town to work in a large agricultural district. We propose that Leeds, as it ought to be, shall be the town of election for the northern division of the Riding; and we shall leave to Wakefield, its former rival, to be the election town for the southern division. I mention these details because I wish to show that we have really no selfish nor sinister design in making this recommendation. Sir, we thought it but respectful to Parliament and the country that we should ourselves, and personally, examine into and consider well all the plans that could be devised to effect the object which we have in view. We thought it due to this House to bring forward our plan so matured that we could confidently recommend that plan for your adoption which we consider more advantageous to the community at large. But this, after all, is a question of detail, belonging properly for the Committee of this House. Although I shall endeavour to support the views of the Government, and although I shall be prepared to express to the House, on another occasion, the minute details of this plan, and all those reasons which I think can be urged for the adoption of this line of demarcation, if the House shall admit the principle, we have no other object in view but that there shall be carried into effect that plan which is most agreeable to the House, as well as most advantageous to the country; and if any Gentleman can show to the House that there can be a line of demarcation more advantageous to the community,

more just in its conception—one more fair in its application, and more beneficial in its results—Her Majesty's Government will be only too well pleased to support it.

Sir, it remains for me to express to the House the views which Her Majesty's Government have adopted in regard to the two other seats that are vacant. With regard to the two other seats, we have considered that on the whole we cannot be guided in the present instance by a better principle than that I have attempted to express. I would remind hon. Gentlemen that the question we have to consider now is not the large question of Parliamentary Reform—it is the important question of completing the proper number of Members in this House, with a due deference to all existing arrangements in respect to the franchise. We must, then, apportion these seats with a due regard to our existing Parliamentary arrangements. I hope that when this subject is discussed, it will be viewed with a conviction of the truth of that observation. There may be Gentlemen who disapprove of the present system upon which the constituencies of the country are based. Different opinions upon such a question may be legitimately maintained and powerfully advocated. But these questions do not enter into this discussion; which arises from the necessity of having to apportion those vacant seats with due regard to all existing arrangements in respect to the franchise, and with a due regard to the number of voters throughout the country, which, of course, must form a most material element in our enquiry when we are called upon to decide upon the apportionment of those seats. Taking these as a test of the relative claims of the different places to increased representation—taking as a test the degree of representation which they at present possess—taking, I say, their

relative claims, and making such claims depend upon their present relative representation—I find among a considerable number of constituencies of counties and boroughs the city of Westminster, with a constituency of 14,800; the town of Liverpool, with a constituency of 17,400; the borough of Lambeth of 18,000. I further find these three places supported by the following amount of population, namely, in Westminster, 241,000; in Lambeth, 251,000; in Liverpool, 376,000 —each of these places represented by two Members. There is, also, Finsbury, with a constituency of 20,000 —supported by a population of 323,000; Marylebone, with a constituency of 19,700—supported by a population of 370,000; the Tower Hamlets, with a constituency of 23,000—supported by a population exceeding 500,000; Middlesex, with a constituency of 14,600; Manchester, with a constituency of 13,900—supported by a population of 316,000; South Lancashire, with a constituency of 21,650, with a population of between 500,000 and 600,000. Taking all this into consideration—the number of the constituency, weighing also the fact that the constituencies of the counties consist of occupying tenants of an amount greater than that required for borough constituencies; when the number of constituency is equal, we thought that we ought to decide in their favour, rather than in that of the borough constituencies, which are only of a lower qualification.

[In answer to an Hon. MEMBER.] Where constituencies are formed of occupying tenants, say of 50*l.*—or what you like—it shows, as regards the material of the constituencies, there is equally a population which, irrespective of them, may also rank with the 10*l.* franchise in the boroughs. Taking also into

consideration what I call in the counties the surplus population, irrespective of that population which is located in the limits of the boroughs, and taking also into consideration—which must not be omitted—what may be fairly called the permanent element of national wealth, which must not be omitted from consideration, Her Majesty's Government have resolved to recommend to the House to apportion the two remaining seats to the southern division of the County of Lancashire. Sir, I have been told that the votes have been lost to the towns, and that they ought to be given to the towns. Her Majesty's Government are fully aware that this is an objection that is easy to make; but it is most difficult to sustain. No one more appreciates the energy of the great towns than myself. I do not wish, however, to mix up either their present proud position or their future fortunes with the degraded memories of St. Albans or Sudbury. Sir, I cannot think that the Members taken from those boroughs could either sustain their energies or add to their value. Let the House, however, recollect that in recommending the apportionment of those four seats to the West Riding of Yorkshire and the southern division of Lancashire, we are including in these two county constituencies scores of towns four times larger than either Sudbury or St. Albans. If you take the surplus population of South Lancashire and the West Riding of Yorkshire—if you take that portion of the population which is not admitted within the pale of any borough constituency—you have upwards of 1,400,000 persons who are directly or indirectly represented now by only four Members. We propose that they shall be in future represented by eight Members—that is our proposition. And if you look at the population of any of our greatest boroughs and

constituencies brought under our consideration, you will not find one of them that equals the surplus political population of the West Riding, or South Lancashire; and you will not find any two, or any three, or any four of those great constituencies equal to that united population to which I have referred. We propose then, in regard to South Lancashire, for the same reasons, in order that the minority, whether it be Liberal or Conservative, whether it be agricultural or manufacturing, may be truly represented, that South Lancashire shall be also divided. South Lancashire consists of two hundreds—the hundred of Salford, and the hundred of West Derby. The hundred of Salford includes the flourishing city of Manchester, and the hundred of West Derby the famous port of Liverpool; therefore there is a natural and well-understood line of demarcation. The result upon the constituency will be that the hundred of Salford will contain about 12,000 of a constituency, and the hundred of West Derby about 9,500. Sir, there are some details with respect to this division which I might mention if the House would sanction them; but I think the House will excuse them at present. I have thus endeavoured to place before the House the intentions of the Government; and to show the various considerations which have induced Her Majesty's Ministers, with the utmost impartiality, to recommend this plan to the House. There is no popular suggestion that has been supported by an amount of opinion entitled to respect, which we have not gravely considered. It will be most gratifying to us if we have succeeded in recommending to the House such a proposition as may create a constituency that will command the respect of this House and of the country at large. Desirous to do that which we

think most advantageous to the community, we have thought proper, in deference to the pledge which we previously gave, and in pursuance of that duty to the Sovereign, which we acknowledge, to bring this proposition before Parliament; and, Sir, whatever may be its fate, in making this proposition, we are convinced we have only done that which was incumbent upon us as Ministers of the Crown to bring this proposition before Parliament. Whatever may be the result of it, we are confident that we have only done our duty as Ministers of the Crown in submitting it to the consideration of this House. It is obviously a question of the greatest importance that the constitutional number of the House of Commons should be completed, and that that continuous and systematic deficiency of our number, which is perilous to the welfare of the country and to the honour of this House, should be removed. If these propositions are adopted, we believe that public opinion will sanction them, that they will contribute to the welfare of the community, and tend to increase the strength and the lustre of the House of Commons.

MARCH 3, 1854.

On Lord John Russell's Motion for the Postponement of the second reading of the Government measures of Reform, from March 13 to April 27.*

SIR JOHN SHELLEY, SIR EDWARD DERING, LORD ALEXANDER LENNOX, MR. LABOUCHERE, MR. PHINN, SIR JOHN PAKINGTON, MR. HUME, and SIR GEORGE GREY, spoke on the motion.

Mr. DISRAELI: Sir, I do not clearly understand the reasons of the noble Lord in favour of this Motion, which, however, I shall certainly not oppose. I understood the noble Lord to say that the supplies

* This Bill had been introduced in fulfilment of a pledge given in 1853, by Lord Aberdeen, that he would bring forward 'a large measure of Parliamentary Reform.' Lord John Russell, accordingly, introduced the promised measure early in the Session of 1854; though the evident reluctance of the House of Commons to discuss so important a subject, when the country was on the verge of a great war, necessitated its eventual withdrawal.

This Bill proposed to confer the right of voting for both counties and boroughs upon 10*l.* occupiers, and for boroughs upon 6*l.* occupiers, the rate-book in each case being the test of the value; to create five new special franchises common to both counties and boroughs, and to abolish, after the expiration of interests then existing, the right of freemen to vote as such.

The Bill further provided that fifty-two boroughs should be totally or partially disfranchised, whereby sixty-two seats would be vacated, of which no less than forty-six were to be given to counties. It also contained, among other provisions, a remarkable one for securing representation to minorities, by enacting that, where a county or borough returned three Members to Parliament, each elector should only vote for two.

had been granted by all parties in this House with a facility and spirit very commendable; and therefore I conclude, when the noble Lord made his statement in introducing this Bill of projected Parliamentary reform, he had, of course, calculated all the circumstances connected with supply which could affect its second reading. But though the noble Lord had taken into consideration the time necessary for granting supply, I now understand him to say that he had not taken into consideration the time necessary for voting the ways and means. That appears to be one of the reasons why the noble Lord thinks it expedient to postpone the consideration of the second reading of this Bill of Parliamentary reform, which was fixed for the 13th of this month.

It certainly appears somewhat strange that the noble Lord should have omitted to take into calculation the time necessary for voting ways and means, as well as granting supply; yet that appears, so far as I could follow the noble Lord, the most efficient argument adduced in favour of his change of operations. The noble Lord, in estimating the time for these financial operations, could hardly have anticipated that so small a space would have been required for supply as turned out to be the case; for I think the noble Lord himself voluntarily expressed his satisfaction with the conduct of the House of Commons in this behalf, and I am sure every Gentleman present will agree that supply was never voted with more alacrity. I know I myself attended yesterday morning at an unusually early hour for supply, in order to lay one or two matters before the consideration of the Committee, and I found half a million had been voted in the time I was taking off my great-coat and walking to my usual seat on this

bench, by which I lost the opportunity of making those remarks. Therefore, when the noble Lord made up his mind to come down to the House and propose a great project, when he estimated the time which must elapse before the decision of the House upon its merits could be taken, he could hardly have supposed that voting supply would have taken so short a time as it did. I do not know whether the noble Lord will find as great facility with the ways and means as he has with supply, but I own I am rather alarmed at the intimation the noble Lord gives us of what awaits us next Monday.

But a second reason given by the noble Lord is also, in my mind, of not so satisfactory a nature as, for the sake of the noble Lord, I could have wished. The noble Lord says we are still negotiating with the Emperor of Russia. The noble Lord was, of course, aware of that when he introduced the Bill on the 13th of last month. The noble Lord then, of course, calculated the time which would necessarily or probably elapse before these negotiations could be brought to an issue, as well as the time that would be required by the House of Commons to vote supply. Now, I want to know why the noble Lord having these means of forming an estimate of the time necessary, and having for this purpose more experience than perhaps any Member of the House—why the noble Lord took the step he did, of introducing this measure, of fixing a day for the decision of the House on the second reading when it appears, from the reasons which the noble Lord has offered us to-day, he was not justified in the course which he then took, and is, consequently, obliged to postpone for a considerable period the time when the decision of the House of Commons can be asked on this measure, and when he declines—very wisely declines—to pledge

himself that even on that distant day the decision of the House of Commons shall be demanded.

I cannot help thinking, looking to the importance of the subject—looking also to the peculiar circumstances in which we find ourselves involved—it would have been better if the noble Lord, having come to the decision that it was advisable to postpone this measure, had met us openly at first, and told us that circumstances did not justify him in bringing forward so soon as he intended a measure of Parliamentary reform; that he felt himself pledged to introduce a measure of that kind as soon as circumstances admitted it—but that, until he clearly saw he had the power and opportunity of proceeding with the measure, he would not detail to the House the scheme of reform which he meant to introduce. I think that would have been the wisest and most discreet course for a Minister to have taken, because, Sir, we must remember that this is a question which has not been hastily taken up by the noble Lord and his Colleagues. It is now for several years that the noble Lord, as Minister, or in a position almost as eminent, has been announcing to the House and to the country that he intended to propose a further reform of the House of Commons. The noble Lord had the advantage, as First Minister, of proposing a measure for the reform of Parliament. It was laid on the table—not a single objection was ever made to it by any Gentleman who sits on this side of the House—indeed, no opportunity was ever given to us of discussing that measure. Well, a considerable time has now elapsed, and we have on the table another measure of Parliamentary reform which has no resemblance to the one introduced two years ago; though the noble Lord cannot allege that, in consequence of the

opposition at that time, or the criticism which it elicited, the measure he now offers is so different in character from its predecessor. Again we are in a position in which there is at least a prospect of the second Reform Bill of the noble Lord not being proceeded with. It is postponed to a distant day. Its projector announces that even he will not pledge himself on that distant day to bring it forward. Its projector may be perfectly justified in the course which he has taken, but in my opinion he ought never to have brought forward the measure in detail, if he did not see a fair prospect of advancing it.

The House should consider this point—Is it for the public advantage that a Minister of the country should always be laying siege, as it were, to its Constitution? It is a very fair thing for a Member of the House of Commons, who thinks there ought to be great changes in the State, to bring forward his views by way of Motion in this House. He generally gets defeated by a considerable majority. He renews his efforts from time to time. If public sympathy is sluggish, his project sleeps; if circumstances allow him to bring it forward with more advantage, his project advances; it may in time be crowned with success. He carries on a constitutional and not a dangerous agitation. The greatest evil which he has to encounter—the very greatest misfortune he has to experience—is, perhaps, for the House to be counted out, as it once was counted out on Parliamentary reform itself. Such a course operates in no manner injurious to the public; but it is a very different thing when a Minister announces that he is an agitator against the institutions of the country. The noble Lord may be perfectly right in his views on this question—not that I am entering now in any way into the merits of his measure—but it is a great dis-

advantage that a Minister of England should be avowedly one who disapproves of the institutions of the country, and does not change them only because he has not the power. Whatever may be the merits of the measure of the noble Lord, or of any other measure on the subject which may be introduced by any other Minister or Gentleman, one great advantage in the Constitution is, that it is a thing settled. We live under a Constitution, of which the essence of its excellency is, that it is something which is established. Now, I want to know what has been the position of the House of Commons—of the reformed House of Commons—when for the last four or five years the most eminent man in our assembly, justly possessing the confidence of a great party in the nation, has announced that he disapproves of the character of this institution of the State; that he disapproves of its elements, of the materials of which it is formed; that he thinks measures should be passed which should greatly change its character, which should greatly affect its influence—who yet is unable to pass his measures, and nevertheless remains Minister of the country.

There are a great many Gentlemen in this House who, like the Member for East Kent (Sir Edward Dering), who addressed us to-night, are, they tell us —and we have no reason to doubt them — sincere and conscientious reformers, but who think it an inopportune season to deal with the reconstruction of Parliament when we are engaged in a war which may be a war of magnitude. I will not now discuss that topic. If ever there should be an opportunity, we shall discuss it on the Amendment of the hon. Baronet, though I confess I am not very sanguine that the speeches intended to be made on

that subject will ever, Sir, be addressed to you. But consider the effect. If the policy recommended by the hon. Member for East Kent be right—and unquestionably it is one supported, if not by a majority, by large numbers in this House (that is evident from the tone of this discussion)—look at the position in which the noble Lord has placed the House, by introducing his measure in detail to us, and, at the same time, not being able to carry it forward. Now, Sir, our supplies have been voted with a feeling of unanimity to which the noble Lord, I think in a very proper tone, did justice, but which the right hon. Gentleman who last addressed the House cavilled at, with, I think, less correct feeling. But, Sir, whatever may be the fortune of this war, we shall not be wise men if we suppose, as in some quarters is flippantly supposed, that it is to be a brief war—that its end is to be accomplished in a moment. It is more prudent to suppose that we are about to embark in a severe, and even a protracted struggle. All men agree that it is wiser to prepare for such a contingency. Well, Sir, no Ministry, not even a Ministry as favoured as those who sit on the bench before me, can suppose that year after year, they can proceed with a war of this character always with success, always with enthusiasm on the part of the people, always with ready and generous sympathy on the part of the House of Commons, even on the part of their opponents. There will be moments of gloom, despondency, and discontent. There may be—which, God forbid!—there may be disaster. There may be a time when it will be difficult to appeal to the House of Commons for support. You may not have political parties with the same spirit which now animates them. You may have near divi-

sions on questions of increased or new taxation. The Ministry may carry an unpopular tax, or continue an unpopular war, by a very narrow majority; and then, when the people of this country come to look at the majority of twenty, perhaps, which doubles the income-tax, or reimposes the soap duty, they will say, 'Here are twenty fellows, eighteen of whom ought not to have seats in the House of Commons; here are twelve in schedule A, there are six in schedule B; these are the supporters of the Government;' the very men whom they have denounced, and marked, and branded as persons unworthy of public confidence; and it would be added, 'Yet these are the men who are carrying on war with the Emperor of All the Russias; these are the men who are inflicting colossal imposts on the people of this country.' The weight of such circumstances should alone have made the noble Lord hesitate before he introduced his measure in detail, and should certainly make him hesitate before he makes up his mind to relinquish it for ever. In my mind it would be of advantage that the House of Commons should decide upon this scheme. I know the noble Lord has already stated that he himself sees no objection to proceeding with a measure of Parliamentary reform in a time of war, and of all wars, the one most opportune for Parliamentary reform is, according to the noble Lord, a Russian war. Those are admissions which have been generously and voluntarily offered to us by the noble Lord. I am, therefore, to suppose that the noble Lord will find it his duty—difficult as it is to imagine such an event—some day to propose the second reading of this Bill.

But the noble Lord will, of course, be in some degree influenced by the sentiments of his chief sup-

porters. I have listened to them to-night with some dismay; and if the noble Lord can extract from the expression of their opinions any harmony of feeling to guide him in what, I admit, is a most difficult conjuncture—and if any man in the House is equal to the task the noble Lord is he—he will accomplish greater results almost than he has ever yet achieved. For contrast the support which he has received to-night from the right hon. Gentleman the Member for Taunton (Mr. Labouchere), and the right hon. Baronet the Member for Morpeth (Sir G. Grey),* with that which has been authoritatively pronounced, on the part of English Radicals, by the patriarch of reform, the hon. Member for Montrose. The right. hon. Member for Taunton tells us he is for postponement, but the only thing he more particularly wishes is entire withdrawal. That, I infer, would be the policy recommended by the right hon. Member for Taunton. The Member for Morpeth, who read an unnecessary lecture to my right hon. Friend the Member for Droitwich (Sir J. Pakington), has sung in the same note as the Member for Taunton—that there is nothing in the world more prudent than postponement, except giving up the Bill altogether. What says the hon. Member for Montrose? If the Bill is given up, he exclaims, its projectors are abased—they cannot hold up their heads on the Treasury bench again—their character is lost for ever; but he knows them so well, his confidence in them is so unbounded, that he is as certain, come what will, on the 24th of April we shall have the second reading of

* These distinguished members of the House, and former members of the Whig Cabinet of 1846-52, had been omitted in the arrangements of the 'Coalition Ministry.' They occupied a separate bench with some other excluded colleagues.

this Bill, as that he is now sitting in his wonted seat in the House of Commons. But these very expressions of the hon. Gentleman must prepare the Government for what awaits them, if on that day, which he deems impossible may occur, the Reform Bill should not be read a second time.

Sir, I cannot congratulate the Government on the prospective condemnation of the hon. Gentleman's amiable credulity. The right hon. Baronet the Member for Morpeth has just, according to his wont, delivered some sententious dogmas to the House for the guidance of their conduct. The right hon. Gentleman will not hear of statesmen placed in the situation of the noble Lord, as leader of the House, being influenced in these great matters of State by what are called feelings of personal honour. The right hon. Gentleman says, 'A statesman is to do that which he believes best for the country, and he is not to be hampered by feelings of personal consideration, arising out of pledges which he may have given, and representations which he may have made;' and the right hon. Gentleman reproved those Members of the House who referred to a feeling of private honour as one which ought to bind the noble Lord in the circumstances in which he stands. I will not enter into a controversy upon one of the finest points of ethics; but when the right hon. Gentleman lectures the House so freely, has he forgotten that only within, I may say, a few days the Prime Minister of England, in another place, excusing and apologising, as it were, for the conduct of the Government in introducing this Bill, said it was impossible not to introduce it, for the Ministers were bound to do so as a matter of honour? Sir, I am always ready to recognise the eminent posi-

tion of the noble Lord, and ready to defer to his opinion, as that of one of the guiding spirits of the Ministry; but if only as an affair of courtesy, some credit is due to the public declaration of the First Minister, and when I read, authoritatively declared to us, the declaration, that the Government, in introducing this Bill, were influenced by a feeling of personal honour, I think the lecture which we have received from the right hon. Member for Morpeth is both unauthorised and misplaced.

This declaration, Sir, made by Lord Aberdeen in another place, reminds me of one point which I cannot leave untouched, because it has considerable reference to the subject before us. What were the conditions upon which the present Government was formed, according to the present Prime Minister? What was—to use a word which is not English, and is, perhaps, used too often here—what was the programme of the existing Administration? The noble Earl, when, a little more than a year ago, he acceded to office—it is very remarkable, and this is an occasion on which the country should be reminded of it—announced that his Government was formed on four great principles—the extension of free trade, which has not been extended; the maintenance of peace, which has become a state of war; the principle of public education, to be secured by the production of a great legislative measure, which great legislative measure we have not had; but this we have received from Her Majesty's Government—opposition to the only educational measure which has been introduced into the House; and lastly, and above all, a 'large' measure of Parliamentary reform. When that large measure of Parliamentary reform may be carried,

I pretend not to foresee. Some may be as sanguine as the hon. Member for Montrose; others on the contrary may be as hopeful as the right hon. Members for Taunton and Morpeth. But one thing, I think, is pretty well ascertained, that notwithstanding the Emperor of All the Russias, before April elapses the question will, at least, be set at rest, and we shall know whether the House is to be reconstructed, or whether we are to continue as at present, assisting in the government of the country with nearly a sixth of our Members held up to the public by Ministers as men not entitled or qualified to exercise the office of representatives of the people.

So much for the great principles on which the Government of my Lord Aberdeen was founded, and so much for the four large measures that were to be introduced. This, the Reform Bill, was the last to which the supporters of the Government seemed to cling; and they had a right to believe that this was a promise which would be fulfilled, because representations were made to their followers not in slight and ordinary terms, and because expectations were held out to the country not of a trivial character. We are told now that wars and rumours of wars are the sufficient causes for the present Government not fulfilling this their positive and most important pledge. But, remember, at the time when war, and even invasion, was deemed to be instant and impending, this promise of reform was repeated, this pledge renewed, and Members of the present Cabinet even went to the hustings when appointed to office, and at the same time dilated on the terrors of invasion and the blessings of reform. Remember, also, that at the time when the present Government was constructed, we

were told that it was framed on a principle of enormous personal sacrifice—that men descended to occupy posts inferior to their previous situations, and even inferior to their own opinion of their own talents. We were told then that there were extreme difficulties in bringing together a band of highly-gifted patriots, sacrificing all selfish considerations on the altar of their country—so that the Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Gladstone), for example, and the President of Public works (Sir William Molesworth) could meet together in council to consult for the welfare of their country. But a great principle did bring them together—Parliamentary reform—so far as the Chancellor of the Exchequer was concerned, in a Conservative sense, and so far as the President of the Board of Works was concerned, in a form that would satisfy the disciples of Bentham and of Grote. This was the talisman that bound them all together; this the pervading influence, which allowed elements, apparently so discordant, to work in harmony for the advantage of the country. But the spell seems to have evaporated, though it is the only condition to which we are indebted for enjoying, at this moment, the administrative abilities of the First Lord of the Admiralty.* At a time when we have two considerable fleets, when we have penetrated the mysteries of the Euxine and are about to break the ice of the Baltic, it is a satisfaction to recollect that, if Lord Aberdeen had not agreed to bring forward a large measure of Parliamentary Reform—not a wise measure, not a moderate measure, but a large measure of Parliamentary reform—then, for aught we can see,

* Sir James Graham, who had joined the Coalition Ministry on an undertaking from Lord Aberdeen that there should be 'a large measure of Parliamentary Reform.'

the energy, the experience which distinguish the right hon. Gentleman the First Lord of the Admiralty would not have been enlisted in the service of his Sovereign and his country. Sir, these considerations I offer for the consolation of Parliamentary reformers. I fear they can hardly hope to have their measure, but there has been some magic in the name. Under that standard, at least, those have enlisted who, I have no doubt, will contribute to the greatness of the country and the glory of Parliament. They, at least, have been led by that phrase to form a coalition Government, and their supporters must be satisfied that, though the 'large measure' which they looked forward to with so much eagerness cannot be passed, still if the phrase had not been circulated, the Ministers who have disappointed them would not now be sitting on those benches.

APRIL 11, 1854.

On Lord John Russell's withdrawal of the Government Reform Measures.

MR. HUME, SIR EDWARD DERING, MR. BRIGHT, MR. LABOUCHERE, LORD JOCELYN, and LORD HARRY VANE spoke on the occasion.

Mr. DISRAELI: I think, Sir, that Her Majesty's Government have arrived at a sound conclusion in that which they have communicated to the House to-night, and that the country is to be congratulated upon it. I am not, therefore, disposed to indulge in those sarcasms which the noble Lord anticipates on this occasion; and if the conduct of the Government with respect to other measures which I may also feel it to be my duty to oppose be influenced by the same feelings and regulated by the same policy, I can promise the noble Lord that he will experience from us an opposition as mitigated as he will now. Although I shall never shrink from exercising my best efforts to vindicate the opinions of my friends, and to resist any measures which we think obnoxious to the public welfare, if such measures are brought forward by the noble Lord, I can assure the noble Lord I am little disposed to-night, after the address he has made, to view with any spirit of acerbity the course he has adopted. Although it has been my fate to be always seated opposite to the noble Lord, I can say, most sincerely, there is no one in this House has a more heartfelt respect for the noble Lord than I have. I

think his character and career are precious possessions of the House of Commons, and I am sure that the Members of the House of Commons will always cherish them. Wherever the noble Lord sits, I am sure he will be accompanied by the respect of every Member of this House; and I think the manner in which to-night he has made what was evidently a painful communication is in every way worthy of the noble Lord's character.

But, Sir, although I am satisfied with the course which Her Majesty's Ministers have proposed to take with respect to this Bill for Parliamentary Reform, and although the feelings which I have endeavoured imperfectly to express with regard to the noble Lord are sincere, I still feel it my duty to express my conviction that all that the noble Lord has said to-night has not really met the real difficulty of his position. All the influences which he has placed before us to-night, and which have induced him to take a course so opposite to that which he originally contemplated, have been in operation during the whole of the Session; and, therefore, I am obliged to ask the noble Lord how it was that, yielding now to these influences, the noble Lord and his Colleagues felt themselves justified in bringing forward this Bill for Parliamentary Reform at the commencement of the Session?

The noble Lord has stated, to-night, a variety of causes which have induced him to adopt this final course. Did they not exist when Parliament met? Did they not exist on the 13th of February, when the noble Lord in detail, in spite of every warning, notwithstanding every remonstrance, determined to place that measure before Parliament and the country? Why

on the very first night we assembled the noble Lord was met from this side of the House by appeals to him not to pursue the course he then contemplated. He was told that the state of war that then virtually existed was one that rendered the period most inopportune for the discussion of a proposal for organic changes in the Constitution of the country. The noble Lord would not listen to the appeals then made to him. The noble Lord, with great ingenuity, maintained by instances and by arguments that a period of war was particularly qualified and adapted for the discussion of such business as this; that, the public mind being distracted from the measure of Parliamentary reform, it was possible to devise a measure, without being so much influenced by popular feeling and popular passion as in ordinary circumstances they might be. The noble Lord attempted to lay down the principle that the fact of being in a state of war was in favour of this change. The noble Lord afterwards showed us that war with Russia was a condition of things peculiarly favourable to the prosecution of a measure of this kind.

The noble Lord has, to-night, observed that there is some force in the remark that there is inconvenience in laying a measure upon the table and not proceeding with it, which brands, I may say, almost a sixth of the Members of the House of Commons. In a country like this, where so much depends upon prescription, the noble Lord must feel that at any time for a Minister of the Crown to bring forward a measure that shakes the influence of prescription is a hazardous enterprise. It is certainly one that should not be risked, unless that Minister has every prospect of succeeding with his measure, and of substituting for the power or influence which he is going

to destroy or to abrogate that new power or influence which, in his opinion, will more beneficially operate upon the Government of the country. Now, what is Parliamentary reform? We are in the habit of so familiarly using that phrase that we are almost too apt to forget its exact meaning. After all, a measure for the reconstruction of Parliament is a measure to affect and to change the principal depositary of power in the State. A measure of Parliamentary reform is a measure which virtually says to a large class of the people, 'You do not possess political power—you ought to possess political power—and this is a measure to give you political power.' On the other hand, it says to another class, 'You possess political power—you ought not to possess political power—and we are going to take that political power you hold from you.' These are grave measures. A measure of that kind, if introduced merely by an independent Member, may be looked on as a motion brought forward for discussion in a debating society, though the ability of the individual who introduced it, his knowledge of the subject, his depth of reasoning, and eloquence of language, may produce, in the long run, an amount of public opinion that may support and give influence to his views; but when a measure of Parliamentary reform is brought forward by a Minister of the great reputation of the noble Lord, and when a man is told that he does not possess political power, and ought to possess it, and the measure of the Government would give it to him, from that moment that man feels himself as a person aggrieved, as one deprived of his rights, so that you are absolutely producing a disaffected class by the proposition of the Government. On the other hand, every man whose franchise is threatened by such a measure, every cor-

poration, every individual who is told that the Government are about to deprive him of power that he and those who preceded him have long exercised, though the Government do not proceed with the measure, will look upon the Government as their enemy—as persons who, when they have the opportunity, would deprive them of their rights and franchises which they so much value. Therefore, it is clear that when a Minister makes a proposition of this nature and does not proceed with it, he is creating disaffection amongst some classes and dislike amongst others. He is, in fact, weakening the constituted authorities of the country, and enfeebling the established institutions of the land. Such I think a most unwise course, and it only proves that no Minister should embark in an undertaking of such a nature as Parliamentary reform without the necessity for the change being clear, and his ability to accomplish his purpose being evident and palpable.

Now we are told that we are going to war, and that it is necessary that the sympathy of all classes should surround the Government and the Executive. We are told that we are going to war, and you are encouraging and developing the sympathies of all classes of Her Majesty's subjects by telling some that they deserve to possess rights which you will not give them, and by telling others that they exercise rights which you mean to take from them. Why, Sir, the noble Lord has in the course of this Session expressed his opinion that a state of war, and especially a state of war with Russia, was no sufficient reason for relinquishing the measure that has been recently under our consideration, or rather proposed to us. The noble Lord is not the only Member of the Cabinet who has expressed that opinion. The First Minister, in another place and even very recently,

expressed his opinion that there was nothing in the state of our external relations which would induce the Government not to proceed with this measure—a measure which he believed had been received with the utmost favour throughout the country. The noble Lord (Lord John Russell) himself seems to complain of the apathy with which his measure was received by the country. But then we have always been told by the noble Lord and his Colleagues that we should legislate on this question when there is no excitement and no passion; that the proper time for introducing these changes and making these amendments in our representative system is the moment when the people are tranquil, and the public mind is not inflamed, or unduly attracted to the subject, so that the contemplation of statesmen may be calm and undisturbed. And, therefore, it is a new argument introduced into this debate that the apathy of the public mind is a reason for not proceeding with this measure.

Well, but there is another reason which has been urged by the noble Lord, and which, I confess, astonished me. I understood him to complain of the opposition which this measure had received in the House of Commons. Now, what I complain of is, that no opportunity has ever been given us for discussing this measure.

Lord JOHN RUSSELL: I said the House had shown indisposition to consider this measure.

Mr. DISRAELI: But I cannot understand how the noble Lord arrives at the fact that there exists an indisposition on the part of the House of Commons to entertain this measure. The noble Lord in the first place advised the Sovereign to notify, in the Speech from the Throne, that the measure of Parliamentary

reform would be brought forward. This, of course, is the most solemn mode of introducing the subject to the consideration of Parliament. I do not suppose that on the first night of the Session, when Her Majesty's Gracious Speech was under consideration, any one could complain that the manner in which that announcement was received was discouraging to the Minister. An appeal was made to him not to bring forward the measure on the ground of the exigent state of the country; but to this the Minister would not listen. On the contrary, he brings forward this measure, lays it on the table, and says, 'I deprecate discussion now, but on this day fortnight, or some other convenient day, you will discuss the measure which in detail I have now introduced to the notice of the House and of the country.' Now I think that it is very inconvenient that any Minister should bring forward a measure of such vast importance, upon a subject of such general interest—that he should have the opportunity of introducing it, with all the advantages which not only his abilities but his station give him, and that it should never be subjected to the slightest discussion. The principles on which it is founded may be most fallacious, and I think the principles on which this measure is founded are most fallacious; but still no opportunity has been given to the House to express an opinion upon it, because when the exposition of the measure takes place, a future day is fixed by the Government for the discussion of its merits; and then that opportunity thus promised is never given. Well, then, I wish to know whether this opposition or rather this indisposition, which the noble Lord finds to his Reform Bill, is an indisposition on his own benches. I will not say on the Treasury Bench, because we now

have it on the highest authority, that the Government is a Government of sincere Reformers—but I suppose that it is not impertinent to imagine that the indisposition may be on the benches behind the noble Lord. At any rate I venture to say on the part of hon. Gentlemen on this side of the House, that there has been no opposition from these benches. An hon. Gentleman, who is a general supporter of the Government, has spoken of the opposition to this measure as if it had proceeded from us. And no doubt it is not at all impossible that you would have received an uncompromising opposition from the benches opposite to you. But you never gave us an opportunity to discuss the measure, and therefore I beg the country to remember that the indisposition to Parliamentary reform in the present House of Commons, so far as we have any evidence of it, is confined entirely to the noble Lord's own side of the House.

But I beg the House to remark that the noble Lord has not met the difficulty of his case, that all the reasons that he has given for relinquishing his measure to-night were reasons that existed in equal force at the meeting of Parliament, and on the 13th of February when he introduced this Bill. I deny that any member of the Cabinet can advance the present state of the country as a reason for not proceeding with this measure. The noble Lord has very properly vindicated himself from the absurd position in which it is the interest of some parties to place him as being the only Parliamentary Reformer in the Cabinet, and as if it was entirely to vindicate his own personal honour that this measure had been introduced. The noble Lord has very properly recalled the attention of the House to the fact that the Government of the Earl of Aberdeen was founded on the promise of

a 'large' measure of Parliamentary reform. Nor was it merely in deference to the noble Lord that the Government of the Earl of Aberdeen was founded on the principle of Parliamentary reform. A very distinguished Member of the Cabinet* made a 'large' measure of Parliamentary reform a condition of his joining Lord Aberdeen: and Lord Aberdeen, in his speech when he made an exposition of the principles upon which his Government was founded, unequivocally pledged himself to a 'large' measure of Parliamentary reform.

Now, I want to know what were the circumstances under which the Government of Lord Aberdeen made that pledge? What were the circumstances under which the right hon. Baronet the First Lord of the Admiralty made the concession of a large measure of Parliamentary reform a condition of his adhesion to the Government of Lord Aberdeen? Were they circumstances of less peril than the present? Were they less serious? Was the conjuncture less menacing? Why, we really seem to have forgotten the circumstances under which Lord Aberdeen acceded to power. After an interval of between thirty and forty years, what had the House of Commons just done? They had armed the people; they had absolutely called out the Militia; and were training and disciplining 100,000 men. A few months before Lord Aberdeen entered office, the late Government had considerably increased the Naval Estimates; but no sooner had the First Lord of the Admiralty come into office than he doubled those Estimates. Nor had the present Government been four months in office before they formed a project—which they subsequently executed—of having a military camp

* Sir James Graham, First Lord of the Admiralty.

at Chobham. It was well known that the Government then believed that not merely war but invasion was imminent.

Now, Sir, no one will pretend that a war with France is not a much more awful affair than a war with Russia; and yet with a war with France in their opinion impending, they formed their Government on the principle of a large measure of Parliamentary reform. And did the adoption of that statement not serve them? Could they have formed their Cabinet unless they had formed the principle upon which that Cabinet was established? Could they have carried on their Government for six months unless that had been the principle upon which the Government of Lord Aberdeen had been established? Could they have possessed, not merely the great administrative abilities of the First Lord of the Admiralty, but the profound statesmanlike attributes even of the First Commissioner of Works (Sir William Molesworth)? Could he have given to the Government the fruits of those studies which Bentham had inspired and Grote had guided?

How did they carry on the Administration? Why, only a very few months after its formation we had the financial measures of the Chancellor of the Exchequer brought forward, which, according to the noble Lord's statement to-night, was the excuse for not proceeding with Parliamentary reform in the first year that the Government held office. A tax extremely odious in the mode in which it is levied was introduced to this House, it being known that there was an absolute majority against the imposition of that tax, and that the most powerful assailants of this tax—the income tax—were to be found on the benches where the supporters of the present Government mostly congregate. Did not these

Gentlemen say that they disapproved of the unmodified income tax, and only voted for it in consequence of this promise of a large measure of Parliamentary reform? And, therefore, I say that Parliamentary reform was the principle upon which the Government was founded, and without it the present Cabinet would never have existed, and that without it the administration of affairs could not have been carried on. I say also at the same time, that the pledge to give a large measure of Parliamentary reform was made at a time when the state of public affairs, so far as our external relations were concerned, was not less menacing, nay, I think more perilous and threatening than it is at the present time.

Myself opposed to the measure of the noble Lord, I am glad that the Government has relinquished it. But what is the moral that I think we should draw from all these circumstances? I think we should at least come to this conclusion—in my opinion, a salutary one—though no one can question the honour and the sincerity of the noble Lord who has been identified with this great question and this great cause—who will go down in history as connected with it—though no one, I say, can doubt his sincerity, and though I do not for a moment care to question the sincerity of others—still I must say, that there does appear to me, and I think there will appear to the country, that there has been too much levity, for party purposes, in dealing with questions of organic change in the Constitution of this country. Well, now, I think, if we can, under the present circumstances, when there is no party feeling on this question, and when all parties and sections of this House seem pretty well agreed to assist the Government out of the predicament—I think, I say, that if we can arrive at that conclusion, every man, wherever

he sits, will consider probably longer than he might have done two or three years ago before he makes pledges on a subject of this importance. Because we should find that if a Minister persisted—which the noble Lord has wisely and magnanimously resolved not to do—in consequence of a pledge of this kind, in carrying measures not required by the necessities of the country, a great public evil might occur. And if, on the other hand, after having pledged his sagacity as a statesman for the necessity and expediency of such a measure, he finds it necessary to relinquish it, then, although great public mischief may not occur, there is at least this disadvantage—that the confidence of the country in the men they look up to must be necessarily dimmed and diminished. Nor does it seem to me that a time of war, which we are told may be very serious and protracted, is a time when, I do not say this want of confidence, but this diminished confidence, in our principal statesmen should be incurred. I hope therefore, that the noble Lord will not proceed in the course of which, he has given an indication to-night—of postponing for a short though indefinite time his plans of Parliamentary reform. I think it would be much better for the noble Lord—who has made two attempts, which, he says, have not been sanctioned by the country, and which he now feels are not required by the country—to allow this question altogether to drop, and not to embarrass himself by another pledge.

Yet, what has the noble Lord done to-night? After all this somewhat bitter experience, he has absolutely embarrassed himself and all his Colleagues by promising to take as early an opportunity as possible to introduce this measure again. [*Cheers.*] I think that cheer most unwise, and that those who cheer will be probably the

loudest in opposing the measure when it is brought forward. I confess, Sir, I do not understand this getting rid of reform by instalments. You who are always asking for measures of reform, and taking them by instalments, should hardly sanction this new system, by which Reformers are to get rid of their pledges by instalments. It would have been better for the noble Lord to say, 'I have made a considerable attempt. The Cabinet have stood by me. This measure is the result of our united deliberations. But the country does not require it, the times are perilous, and, although I think that a time of war is no good cause why a measure of Parliamentary reform should not be carried if requisite, still it is not now absolutely necessary; it would involve a great struggle, and, therefore, for the present I will say farewell to Parliamentary reform.' Hon. Gentlemen opposite would then have had just as good a chance of getting Parliamentary reform when the time arrived as they have now by retaining the vain pledges of a Minister. Surely, the experience of the last two years must have taught you that you are not one whit the nearer a measure of Parliamentary reform because you have the pledges of statesmen that they will give it to you. Here you have statesmen who have pledged themselves, and who were most sincerely anxious to fulfil their pledges, but you did not obtain your object. You never can obtain a change such as you desire until the great preponderance of public opinion demands it.

Well, then, why embarrass the Government with a standing pledge of this kind? The noble Lord will pardon me for saying that it would have been more statesman-like if, after all he has done, and, I will say, after all he has suffered, he had asked the

House to-night to place confidence in his sincerity, and to show by the manner in which they received his words to-night, that they thought his honour was intact; and had then told them that it was much better not to embarrass the Government any longer with pledges on this subject, but that they might be confident that when the time was ripe, the measures that were demanded by necessity would be brought forward by any Ministry which happened then to be in possession of power. I hope that the noble Lord will at least draw this lesson from the past—not to embarrass himself with pledges, which he knows not when he can fulfil, merely for party purposes, and in order to animate followers who must feel that, after all, measures of national importance depend upon something more solid than the word of any individual, however sincere or however gifted.

MARCH 15, 1858.

From a speech in answer to Mr. Bernal Osborne's observations on the policy of Lord Derby's Government.*

THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER:—The hon. Gentleman then went to the climax of all politics, and that is Parliamentary reform. He seems extremely alarmed at the opinions which are prevalent on these benches on the subject of Parliamentary reform. Nobody, it appears, may poach upon that manor except the Liberal party. The hon. Gentleman, in his profuse quotations,—for which he was always remarkable, though unfortunately they have not been on this occasion relieved by the brilliancy which in the old days reconciled us to endless extracts from *Hansard*—the hon. Gentleman has fixed on the speech I made recently at my county town as one of his texts; and he says I stated that the Parliamentary Reform Bill of 1832 was a gross Whig job. [An hon. MEMBER: 'So

* Mr. Disraeli resumed office as Chancellor of the Exchequer in February 1858. On the night that he took his seat after his re-election, Mr. Bernal Osborne, on the order of the day, made a general attack on the new Government. Mr. Bernal Osborne having filled the office of Secretary of the Admiralty in the recently displaced Ministry, had been silent during a painful interval of three years. It was on this occasion that the Chancellor of the Exchequer congratulated the late Secretary on his 'wild shriek of liberty.'

it was.'] An hon. Gentleman behind me says, 'So it was.' My hon. Friend is nameless—for I don't know from whom that expression of opinion proceeded—but I must tell the hon. Gentleman (Mr. Osborne) and the House that it is a mistake to suppose that I ever used that phrase. On the contrary, I hope I shall always speak with the respect due to a Parliamentary statute of that importance, which had engaged for so long a time the earnest attention and solicitude of the country. I certainly did say—and I have said it before, not merely on the hustings of Buckinghamshire, but in the House of Commons—that, though it was a great statute, which no doubt in its primary purpose had the welfare of the country and the advantage of the State for its principal objects, unfortunately from the unreasoning excitement of the time, facility was given for perpetrating gross jobs during its progress through Parliament of which certain parties had not been slow to avail themselves. And, Sir, I believe that is the general opinion of the country. I am sure it is an opinion of this House not restricted to the Conservative benches, and I believe it will be the calm decision of posterity.

Let us now meet this question, with respect to which the hon. Gentleman says it is necessary that we should be explicit, and that there should be no evasion—let us meet it, I say, with that frankness with which he desires to see it treated. Sir, I state that which hon. Gentlemen on both sides of the House will acknowledge to be true,—that when that Bill was first proposed in this House there was a violent party in the country who laid it down as a principle, while Parliament was deliberating upon it, that they would have 'the Bill, the whole Bill, and nothing but the Bill.' The consequence was, that there were many Amendments at that time

proposed and suggested, not only on the Opposition but the Government side, which were not duly considered—which were indeed rudely rejected; and after that Bill became law, there was considerable dissatisfaction with many points of detail which the country in its more sober moments recognised as not having been maturely considered at the time of its passage through Parliament. But in this House it was always laid down by the party who were then in power—and who were in power, and properly in power, in consequence of the passing of that Bill—that the great cause of suspicion against the Tories was, that they did not give a sincere adhesion to the Reform Act. It was said the Tories ought never to be permitted to regain power in this country, because, it was alleged, if they got into power they would alter the Reform Act. And this was so great a clamour, and such an amount of prejudice was fostered in consequence of it throughout the country, that for many years the noble Lord (Lord John Russell) and his friends sat upon these benches, although there was great discontent and dissatisfaction with their conduct amongst the Liberal party, who were committed to their support, lest the Tory party should come into power and change the Reform Act.

Under these circumstances, in the year 1834 Sir Robert Peel rose in this House, and in the most solemn manner addressed himself to that question. He made a compact, as it were, with the country and with Parliament. He engaged, with the party of which he was the leader, and with the colleagues with whom he was acting in public life, that he would accept the Reform Act, and he did accept it, heartily and sincerely, as the settlement of a great question, and that, if he found himself in power, he would neither directly nor indirectly attempt to

change or tamper with its provisions. And on that compact, the Conservative party, as it was called, sincerely and honourably acted; and whenever measures were brought forward to change that Act—not from our side, but from the Liberal party—the Whig Ministry were invariably supported by the Conservative party in maintaining intact the spirit and provisions of the Reform Act. At last, and late in the day, 'finality' was deserted; and we were told—and told by the leader of the Whig party—that there must be a new settlement of the question and a new Reform Bill; and from that moment I held myself free—and I am sure I am expressing the opinions of those with whom I act and of the great body of the Conservative party, not merely in this House, but throughout the country—from that moment we held ourselves free to consider the question of Parliamentary Reform upon its merits, and that if any future plan were brought forward to change the Parliamentary constitution of this country we were open to offer those suggestions which, to our minds, might appear to lead to a settlement most conducive to the public weal.

The noble Lord the Member for the City of London has had ample opportunities of bringing forward a new Reform Bill. It is, I think, seven years ago since a new Reform Bill was introduced to this House. It was not successful; though the opposition did not come from the Conservative side. The noble Lord brought forward another Bill. I am not aware that that measure engaged the sympathy of the House to any great extent. But by the very fact that the First Minister in this House had twice brought forward a new Reform Bill, the question became of that public magnitude that it was totally impossible that a

public man of any leading could ever neglect to recognise its importance. Lord Aberdeen became Minister; and after Lord Aberdeen the noble Lord the Member for Tiverton; and it was announced that those Ministers were going to introduce a new Reform Bill. At last the subject was introduced to the attention of the House of Commons even in a gracious Speech from the Throne; and this year the recommendation was repeated. Thus then its importance was distinctly recognised. Is it wise then that a question of this vast importance should remain unnoticed and unsettled? Is it wise that the country should be allowed to believe that it could be taken up by statesmen for party purposes or selfish ends? If there is anything more likely than another to poison the feelings of the people and to alienate their best sentiments from the institutions of the country, it is the suspicion in the public mind that schemes for reconstructing those institutions are used by public men for party purposes. It is impossible that a question like that of Parliamentary Reform can be hung up and taken down at the convenience of any statesman; so that when in Opposition he is to brandish it in the face of those in office, and when a Minister to replace it in the dark corner of forgetfulness. Under these circumstances, we feel that it is our duty to consider that question, and to consider it with the earnest determination of endeavouring to make a settlement of it that will be satisfactory to the sober-minded people of this country. The hon. Member for Dover asked me what are the principles on which our Reform Bill is to be founded? I do not think I am called on to tell the hon. Gentleman what are the principles of a Bill which we do not propose to introduce to the House during the present Session; but if the hon. Gentleman

asks me what will be our Reform Bill, I will tell him what it will not be. It will not be a Bill devised to prop up a political party, or to uphold the interests of a particular class. It will be founded on principles of general justice, and I hope it will give universal satisfaction.

APRIL 27, 1858.

On Mr. Locke King's Motion, 'That leave be given to bring in a Bill to extend the Franchise in Counties in England and Wales, and to improve the Representation of the People in respect of such Franchise.'

THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER: Sir, I have no objection to urge against the purpose of the Bill which the hon. Gentleman proposes to introduce. I have no objection to extend the franchise at present enjoyed by the counties; and I think that an extension of that franchise may improve the exercise of it. I rise with no prejudice whatever to the general purpose of the Motion of the hon. Gentleman; but, Sir, before acceding to his request to bring in a Bill, which, in the new version of his Motion, is to extend the franchise in counties in England and Wales, and improve the representation of the people in respect of such franchise, I may say that there are several considerations which induce me to fear that the introduction of this measure will be a source of embarrassment to those who seriously intend and wish to improve the franchise.

The hon. Gentleman, in describing the Bill which he now asks leave to bring in, says it is a measure 'small, honest, and just,' the tendency of which would be to remove the greatest anomalies. Now, how stands the general question of the representation at the present moment in England? I speak from memory—and I

may be erroneous in some slight details; but I am confident in the general results—you have a certain number of Members returned to Parliament for those counties with whose franchise the hon. Gentleman only deals. You have between 150 and 160 county Members, returned for England and Wales, and they are returned to Parliament by something more than half a million of electors. You have, on the other hand, about 330 borough Members who are returned to Parliament by a little more than 400,000 electors. Well, Sir, those who are Parliamentary Reformers, and who bring to the vast question of the reconstruction of our representation an impartial spirit, must, at the first blush, be rather struck that the balance between the county representation and the borough representation was not particularly exact and just, and it would seem somewhat strange that more than half a million of electors under our present scheme should only return 150 or 160 Members of Parliament, whilst 400,000 other electors should return 330. One might almost be disposed to say that this would figure amongst the greatest anomalies to which the hon. Gentleman has referred. But what is the remedy which he offers to the House, and which he offers to us, mind you, because he despairs of any great and comprehensive measure of Parliamentary reform being introduced, and says that we can only take refuge in these 'small, honest, and just' measures? The measure of the hon. Gentleman, as I collect it from his brief but lucid narrative, is this:—'There being a great inequality at present between the number of Members who are returned by the half million of electors of counties compared with the number of Members returned by the 400,000 constituents of the boroughs, I will intro-

duce a Bill which shall aggravate that anomaly. I will introduce a Bill which must add, and, probably, add greatly, to the number of electors who return the county Members; but, as I despair of any further change, I would leave the arrangement by which the small number of electors return the large number of Members untouched and uncriticised.' This, then, is the course by which he proposes to remove the anomalies that are recognised in our representative system, and, to use his own language, improve the franchise of the country.

Now, I think the House ought well to consider this question. If we agree to the Motion of the hon. Gentleman on the grounds upon which he has placed it, namely, that any hope of general improvement is impossible, and that, therefore, we ought to accept his 'just, and small, and honest' measure, we shall land ourselves in this position—that we shall have a very small number of Members returned to this House by a very large constituency, and a very large number of Members returned to this House by a very small constituency. Now I draw from a statement which is not speculative, which is not hypothetical, but depends upon facts which are lying upon the table of this House, and upon arguments which are founded upon returns moved for by the hon. Member for Surrey himself, what appears to be this irresistible inference, that if you make up your minds to deal with the question of the franchise in this country, you cannot deal with it partially, and that whatever may be the objections against what are called large and comprehensive measures, I feel persuaded that when you are dealing with the representation of a great people, it is impossible by those 'small, honest, and just' measures to

perpetrate anything but what will be large in injustice and vast in impolicy.

I cannot understand how the hon. Gentleman could ever have brought his mind to take the position which he has done on this subject, for whilst he seeks for a great extension of the suffrage in that class who already possess the enjoyment of the franchise to a greater degree than the rest of the country, he introduces his Motion with the simultaneous proposition that any further change is almost to be despaired of. Is the House prepared, then, for the state of things which the hon. Gentleman contemplates, and which the passing of his measure would bring about? At this moment, in the counties—to which the hon. Gentleman's Motion alone refers—every Member of Parliament represents 3,300 electors; whereas, in the boroughs, every Member of Parliament represents 1,280 electors. Why, Sir, when I hear talk of great anomalies, it appears to me that this is a state of affairs which is also somewhat anomalous. But what is the Motion of the hon. Gentleman? It is, as I said before, to aggravate this anomaly. It is, if passed, that the Members of Parliament for counties shall represent a much greater number of electors than at present, and that a Member who represents a borough constituency shall represent much less.

I do not confound this important point with any question of what is called the landed interest or the urban interest. Unquestionably there are boroughs whose constituencies are entirely agricultural, and there are counties where the constituencies are manufacturing and commercial. That is altogether another question. The question as to a fair and equitable balance of those interests is entirely removed. We have a hard arith-

metical proposition to consider at present—why it is that 500,000 men should at the present moment return only 160 Members to Parliament, and 400,000 men return 330. And when a measure for Parliamentary Reform, which we are told is, 'small, and honest, and just,' and the only one we can obtain, is brought forward to aggravate all those circumstances, and increase the disproportion that at present exists, I ask, is the House really prepared to sanction such a proceeding? If there be on the part of the House—what I cannot doubt there is—a sincere desire for a wise and well-considered settlement of this long-mooted and long-controverted question as to the due and fair representation of the people in this House, I cannot conceive how they could take a Motion more retrograde than that which the hon. Gentleman has brought before us to-night.

Sir, I am not opposed to the extension of the franchise in counties. I think there are classes of persons in counties that might be brought to exercise the franchise with advantage to the State, and with perfect security to all those great institutions which I trust will always be honoured and cherished in this House; but it is impossible any longer, with the information that we have on this subject, to resist the conviction, that if you deal with the county franchise, you must deal also with the franchises that are enjoyed by the towns; and the great Reformer who comes forward and tells us, 'I despair of a general measure that will on the whole secure adequate justice, therefore I will bring forward a little measure which on the face of it must perpetrate great injustice,' is not, in my opinion, with great diffidence, one who proposes a course which will conduce to the advantage of the

public interest, or achieve and accomplish those results which I think all sober-minded men who have duly considered this subject wish to realise. Sir, I cannot make that appeal to the hon. Gentleman, which was made by the noble Lord the Member for Tiverton on a former occasion, as I have not that claim upon the confidence of the hon. Gentleman which the noble Lord has the honour to possess. I cannot appeal to the intentions of the present Government with any hope that he will be influenced by my statement. But I am bound to say as an indication of our present intentions, and in the cause of truth, that the fair and sufficient representation of the people in the Commons House of Parliament is a question which will undergo and command our deep and sincere attention; but I cannot for one moment hold out the hope to the hon. Gentleman that it will be my duty ever to propose to this House a scheme conceived in the spirit of the measure which he now introduces to our notice, telling us at the same time that probably it is the only measure we shall ever be able to obtain. That, I think, would be but a partial settlement of the question, one which would lead to great jealousy, to great public inconvenience, and I cannot doubt to protracted agitation, perhaps, to a conclusion which would be little satisfactory to the nation.

The Bill of the hon. Gentleman, which he now asks leave to introduce, may, as far as it goes, be what he calls a just measure; but if it be, as he announces, an isolated measure, it appears to me one that will aggravate the injustice, of which experience is now said to be felt. I cannot understand upon what principle the hon. Gentleman can vindicate a measure which, under the circumstances to which I have re-

ferred, would deal only with the franchise of the country, and not subject to the same revision and consideration the franchise enjoyed by the constituencies in towns. It appears to Her Majesty's Government and myself that this question of the fair and adequate representation of the people in the House of Commons is one which must be considered as a whole; that it is one, no doubt, which must be approached in a calm and temperate spirit, in a mood of mind very different from that which in times long past accompanied the agitated discussions to which this subject gave rise in this House. Still I cannot doubt that, with the knowledge which we possess, and with the desire among all classes and in all parts of this country to come to a safe and practical solution of the questions which have been brought forward within recent years with reference to this subject—I say I cannot doubt that if Parliament approaches this great subject in a mood of mind not unworthy of it, it would be possible to produce a measure which might give satisfaction to all who consider the subject divested of passion, and with the anxious and sincere desire to add to the strength of the constitutional institutions of the country; but I cannot believe that we are dealing worthily with the question if we permit a Bill such as the hon. Gentleman proposes, and proposes almost in the light of a final measure ('No!'), to be brought forward. Well, then, as a substitute for a final measure. I ask the House, was not the tone of the hon. Gentleman this—'I bring forward this measure because I despair of any larger one being introduced—because there is a general feeling that no alteration will take place; and therefore I propose this to your notice?' Propose what? That which under the circumstances he him-

self describes would be a most unjust measure, and if the circumstances to which he refers are not well founded—if there be a fair prospect of dealing with the question generally and largely—then I say the hon. Gentleman is not justified in bringing forward this Motion.

I will not make an appeal to him to relinquish his present purpose in consequence of the intentions of Her Majesty's Government—I have no claim upon him to do that—but, as representing the Government, who are seriously desirous of considering the question on all its merits, and if possible, of bringing forward a measure for the consideration of Parliament which shall be worthy of their acceptance, I am bound to say that, so far as I am concerned, I cannot sanction the introduction of any measure like that of the hon. Gentleman, which, if carried, would create a great injustice, and be no slight embarrassment to our future legislation. On these grounds, therefore—because, if the measure be carried, it will aggravate an anomaly that already exists; because it will give to that portion of the constituency which is already imperfectly represented in this House, with reference to the other portion, an increase of electors with a relative diminution of representatives; and because it is the intention of Her Majesty's Government to give their consideration to the whole question of the representation of the people in Parliament—an assurance which I do not wish at all should influence the course of the hon. Gentleman—I shall feel it to be my duty, whilst in no way differing from the hon. Gentleman in the general purport of his Motion, not at all opposed to the extension of the franchise in counties, and believing that extension, wisely and well considered, would tend

to the improvement of the representation of the counties, but believing also that the question of county representation cannot be effectively and beneficially dealt with unless we take into our consideration also the representation of other parts of Her Majesty's dominions—then I say that, under these circumstances, I shall feel it to be my duty to move as an amendment the Previous Question.

FEBRUARY 28, 1859.

On moving 'That leave be given to bring in a Bill to amend the Laws relating to the Representation of the People in England and Wales, and to facilitate the Registration and Voting of Electors.'

THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER: Sir, it is my duty to-night to draw the attention of the House to a theme than which nothing more important can be submitted to their consideration. Those which are often esteemed the greatest political questions—those questions, for example, of peace or war which now occupy and agitate the public mind, are in fact inferior. In either of those cases an erroneous policy may be retraced; and there are no disasters which cannot be successfully encountered by the energies of a free people; but the principles upon which the distribution of power depends in a community when once adopted can rarely be changed, and an error in that direction may permanently affect the fortunes of a State or the character of a people.

But, grave as is the duty, and difficult as is the task, which have devolved upon Her Majesty's Government in undertaking to prepare a measure to amend the representation of the Commons in this House, these I admit—and cheerfully admit—are considerably mitigated by two circumstances—the absence of all passion on the subject, and the advantage of experience. Whatever may be the causes, on which I care not to

dwell, I believe that on this subject and on this occasion I appeal to as impartial a tribunal as is compatible with our popular form of Government. I believe there is a general wish among all men of light and leading in this country that the solution of this long-controverted question should be arrived at; and that if public men occupying the position which we now occupy, feel it their duty to come forward to offer that solution—one which I trust in our case will not be based upon any mean concession or any temporary compromise, but on principles consistent with the spirit of our Constitution, which will bear the scrutiny of debate, and which I trust may obtain the sympathy of public opinion—I feel persuaded that in the present conjuncture of our political world such an attempt will meet from this House a candid though a discriminating support. And equally it may be observed, that the public mind of this country has for the last quarter of a century, and especially during its latter portion, been so habituated to the consideration of all questions connected with popular representation, the period itself has been so prolific of political phenomena for the contemplation and study, and I may add, the instruction, of the people of this country, that we are in a much more favourable position than the statesmen who in 1832 undertook the great office which then devolved upon them, because we address not only a Parliament, but a country which has upon this subject the advantage of previous knowledge; and all will agree that this greatly facilitates both discussion and decision. Although some of those who took a leading part in the transactions of 1832, happily for us, still sit in both Houses of Parliament, yet so long is the space of time that has elapsed since those occurrences, I think it is not impossible to speak

of them with something of the candour of history. I do not doubt that our future records will acknowledge that, during some of the most important political events of modern history, those events were treated with the energy and the resource becoming British statesmen. If we judge of the Act of 1832 by its consequences, in the measures of this House and in the character of its Members, it must be admitted that that policy was equal to the emergency it controlled and directed. I cannot, indeed, agree with those who attribute to the legislation of 1832 every measure of public benefit that has been passed by this House during the last twenty-five years. I know well that before the reform of this House took place the administration of this country was distinguished by its ability and precision. I believe, indeed, that, especially in the latter part of the administration of Lord Liverpool, this House was rather in advance of the opinion of the country at large. But I think that the reform of the House of Commons in 1832 greatly added to the energy and public spirit in which we had then become somewhat deficient.

But, Sir, it must be remembered that the labours of the statesmen who took part in the transactions of 1832 were eminently experimental. In many respects they had to treat their subject empirically, and it is not to be wondered at if in the course of time it was found that some errors were committed in that settlement; and if, as time rolled on, some, if not many deficiencies, were discovered. I beg the House to consider well those effects of time, and what has been the character of the twenty-five years that have elapsed since the Reform of 1832. They form no ordinary period. In a progressive country, and a progressive

age, progress has been not only rapid, but, perhaps, precipitate. There is no instance in the history of Europe of such an increase of population as has taken place in this country during this period. There is no example in the history of Europe or of America, of a creation and accumulation of capital so vast as has occurred in this country in those twenty-five years. And I believe the general diffusion of intelligence has kept pace with that increase of population and wealth. In that period you have brought science to bear on social life in a manner no philosopher in his dreams could ever have anticipated. In that space of time you have, in a manner, annihilated both time and space. The influence of the discovery of printing is really only beginning to work on the multitude. It is, therefore, not surprising that in a measure passed twenty-five years ago, in a spirit necessarily experimental, however distinguished were its authors, and however remarkable their ability, some omissions have been found that ought to be supplied, and some defects that ought to be remedied. In such a state of things a question in England becomes what is called a public question. Thus Parliamentary Reform became a public question; a public question in due course of time becomes a Parliamentary question; and then, as it were, shedding its last skin, it becomes a ministerial question.

Reform has been for fifteen years a Parliamentary question; for ten years it has been a Ministerial question. It is ten years since the Prime Minister of that day, who sat in this House, after resisting for some time a series of Motions, the object of which was to change the settlement of 1832, declared it to be the opinion of himself and his colleagues that some alteration ought to be made in it. Public events

prevented that Minister from immediately acting on that public declaration. But in 1852, I believe in this very month of February, that Prime Minister counselled Her Majesty to address Parliament from the Throne in these terms:—

It appears to me that this is a fitting time for calmly considering whether it may not be advisable to make such amendments in the Act of the late reign, relating to the representation of the Commons in Parliament, as may be deemed calculated to carry into more complete effect the principles upon which that law is founded. I have the fullest confidence that in any such consideration you will firmly adhere to the acknowledged principles of the Constitution by which the prerogative of the Crown, the authority of both Houses of Parliament, and the rights and liberties of the people are equally secured.

In consequence of that announcement from the Throne, a measure of Parliamentary Reform was brought forward by the Ministry of the day. It was not pressed, in consequence of a change of Government which then took place. But two years afterwards, another Minister being at the head of affairs—a Minister who, in the general tenor of his politics, afforded a contrast to the one who introduced the measure of 1852—a Minister born and bred in what is termed the Tory camp, as his predecessor was born and bred in the Whig camp;—this Minister being called on to form a Government, having to consider the requirements of the country, as every individual with that responsibility is bound to consider them, felt it his duty to counsel Her Majesty, in February 1854, to address to Parliament this language from the Throne:—

Recent experience has shown that it is necessary to take more effectual precautions against the evils of bribery and corrupt practices at elections. It will also be your duty to consider whether more complete effect may not be given to the principles of the Act of the last reign, whereby reforms were made in the

representation of the people in Parliament. In recommending this subject to your consideration, my desire is to remove every cause of just complaint, to increase general confidence in the Legislature, and to give additional stability to the settled institutions of the State.

In consequence of that announcement, another measure was brought forward by the Ministry of Lord Aberdeen, which was considered stronger than the measure of 1852, proposed by Lord John Russell—for it is not against order thus historically to mention that distinguished name. But circumstances again changed, and prevented the Legislature from proceeding with that measure of Reform. The country became involved in a war with a first-rate power—a war that might be described as European. Before it terminated, a change of Government again occurred. Another statesman, who may well be compared with the two distinguished men who preceded him—a statesman renowned, not only for his ability, but his great experience, and whose political prejudices—if he has any [*laughter and cheers*]—well, then, I will say, whose superiority to prejudice—at any rate, a statesman who has no morbid sympathy with advanced opinions—what did that noble Lord deem it to be his first civil duty to accomplish when he accepted the responsibility of office, and peace had been concluded? In the same solemn and impressive manner adopted by the noble Lord the Member for the City, and by the Earl of Aberdeen, the noble Lord, in 1857, on the conclusion of peace, counselled his Sovereign to address Parliament in these words:—

Your attention will be called to the laws which regulate the representation of the people in Parliament, with a view to consider what Amendments may be safely and beneficially made therein.

The House will therefore see that during three Mi-

nistries the subject of Parliamentary Reform has been formally brought before the attention of the Legislature. And let me remind hon. Gentlemen, that although circumstances have prevented the Ministers who preceded us from either proceeding with the measures which they introduced, or with the measures which they proposed, this House has shown during that interval no disposition to wait, and no reluctance to deal with it. The consequence is, that you have had, up to the end of the last Session of Parliament, independent Members of this Assembly continuing that course which was pursued before any of those messages from the Throne were delivered to the Legislature—namely, that of carrying a Reform of Parliament by measures of detail, instead of taking a general view and bringing forward a comprehensive plan which should effect a fair adjustment of all the points in controversy.

This, Sir, was the state of the question when, a change of Government again occurring, the Earl of Derby became responsible for the administration of this country. Let me now ask the House what, in their opinion, was our duty under these circumstances? That, from the peculiar position at which this question had arrived, it might have been practicable by evasion for a time to stave off a solution, I do not say is impossible; but that is a course which, speaking for my colleagues and myself, I may respectfully observe is not at all congenial with our tastes. Were you to allow this question, which the Sovereign had three times announced was one that ought to be dealt with—which three Prime Ministers, among the most skilful and authoritative of our Statesmen, had declared it was their intention to deal with—to remain in abeyance? Was it to be left as a means of reorganising an oppo-

sition? Is that the opinion of either side of this House? Is it the judgment of this House that that is a wholesome position for political questions of the highest quality to occupy? Was Parliamentary Reform — a subject which touches the interests of all classes and all individuals, and in the wise and proper settlement of which the very destiny of this country is concerned—to be suffered to remain as a desperate resource of faction; or was it a matter to be grappled with only at a moment of great popular excitement, and settled, not by the reason, but by the passion, of the people? Were we to establish, as it were, a chronic irritation in the public mind upon this subject, which, of all others, should not form the staple of our party contests? Were the energies of this country — an ancient country of complicated civilisation—were they at this time of day, boasting as we do of a throne that has endured for a thousand years, to be distracted and diverted from their proper objects—the increase of the wealth and welfare of the community, and wasted in a discussion of the principles of our constitution and of what should be the fundamental base of our political institutions? I cannot for a moment believe that this House would think that a posture of affairs which would be free from danger to the Empire, or which it would be honourable for any public man to sanction. Having, then, to consider the state of the country with reference to this question, and recalling all those details which on this occasion I feel it incumbent on me to place before the House, the Government of the Earl of Derby, on their accession to power, had to inquire what it was their duty to fulfil. And, Sir, it was the opinion—the unanimous opinion of the Cabinet of the Earl of Derby—that this subject must be dealt with, and dealt with in an earnest and sincere spirit.

But I am told that, although it might be necessary that a solution should be effected, although three Prime Ministers who had made the attempt had withdrawn from the effort, yet it was not for the Earl of Derby—even if he deemed it for the interests of his country, and held it to be his paramount duty in the position that he occupied—to undertake such a task. Sir, I dispute that statement. I say it is not a just statement, and cannot in discussion be at all maintained. What is there in the previous career of the noble Earl at the head of her Majesty's Government which should preclude him from taking this course? The noble Lord the Member for the City of London has connected his name with the question of Parliamentary Reform to his enduring honour. I do not grudge the well-earned celebrity which he enjoys. But the noble Lord can remember the day when Earl Grey summoned himself and Mr. Stanley to his cabinet in 1832; and the noble Lord knows well that, had it not been for their ability and energy, probably the Reform Bill, and certainly in its present shape, would never have been passed into law. I think, therefore, it cannot for a moment be contended that there is anything in the position or antecedents of the head of the Government that should preclude him from dealing with this question. What is there in the position of hon. Gentlemen who sit on this side of the House to render it an inconsistent act, on their part, to adopt the course which I shall recommend to-night? Why, when the noble Lord introduced his measure, and also when the measure of the Earl of Aberdeen was introduced into this House, I, acting with the complete sanction and at the personal request of many now sitting behind and around me on these benches, expressed our views upon the course pursued by the Government of that day. I stated then,

on their behalf, that we should offer no opposition to any measure which might be brought in, the object of which was to effect a reconstruction of this House. I said that we had been prepared to adhere to the Conservative compact which was wrung from the Conservative party in 1835 by taunts and reproaches as to their insincerity in professing to be bound by the Act of 1832. I said, that by that Conservative compact, which was made by those who then represented the Conservative party in this House, we were ready to stand; but that if those, who themselves made the settlement, questioned its propriety and proposed to amend it, we should offer no opposition, but would give to those proposed Amendments our candid consideration, making every effort on our part to improve the representation of the people. Therefore I cannot understand the justness of the taunts which have been so freely used against our undertaking a task which, in my mind, no one who occupies these benches can avoid, or ought to shrink from. Sir, it is in pursuance of the pledge which we gave when we acceded to office that, on the part of the Government of the Earl of Derby, I am, with your permission, to-night to call your attention to the measures which we think it politic that this House should adopt.

Now, Sir, it appears to me that those who are called Parliamentary Reformers may be divided into two classes. The first are those whose object I will attempt to describe in a sentence. They are those who would adapt the settlement of 1832 to the England of 1859; and would act in the spirit and according to the genius of the existing Constitution. Among these Reformers I may be permitted to class Her Majesty's Ministers. But, Sir, it would not be candid, and it

would be impolitic not to acknowledge that there is another school of Reformers, having objects very different from those which I have named. The new school, if I may so describe them, would avowedly effect a Parliamentary Reform on principles different from those which have hitherto been acknowledged as forming the proper foundations for this House. The new school of Reformers are of opinion that the chief, if not the sole, object of representation is to realize the opinion of the numerical majority of the country. Their standard is population; and I admit that their views have been clearly and efficiently placed before the country. Now, Sir, there is no doubt population is, and must always be, one of the elements of our representative system. There is also such a thing as property; and that, too, must be considered. I am ready to admit that the new school have not on any occasion limited the elements of their representative system solely to population. They have, with a murmur, admitted that property has an equal claim to consideration; but, then, they have said that property and population go together. Well, Sir, population and property do go together—in statistics, but in nothing else. Population and property do not go together in politics and practice. I cannot agree with the principles of the new school, either if population or property is their sole, or if both together constitute their double, standard. I think the function of this House is something more than merely to represent the population and property of the country. This House, in my opinion, ought to represent all the interests of the country. Now, those interests are sometimes antagonistic, often competing, always independent and jealous; yet they all demand a distinctive representation in

this House; and how can that be effected, under such circumstances, by the simple representation of the voice of the majority, or even by the mere preponderance of property? If the function of this House is to represent all the interests of the country, you must of course have a representation scattered over the country; because interests are necessarily local. An illustration is always worth two arguments; permit me, therefore, so to explain my meaning—if it requires explanation. Let me take the two cases of the metropolis and that of the kingdom of Scotland, to the representation of which the hon. Gentleman opposite (Mr. Baxter) is so much afraid that I should not do justice. The population of the metropolis and that of the kingdom of Scotland are, at this time, about equal. The wealth of the metropolis and the wealth of the kingdom of Scotland are very unequal. The wealth of the metropolis yields a yearly income of 44,000,000*l.*—upon which the assessment under the great schedules of the income tax is levied; while the amount upon which such assessment is levied under those schedules in Scotland is only 30,000,000*l.* There is, therefore, the annual difference between 44,000,000*l.* and 30,000,000*l.*; yet who would for a moment pretend that the various classes and interests of Scotland could be adequately represented by the same number of Members as represent the metropolis? So much for the population test.

Let us now take the property test. Let us take one portion of that very metropolis to which I have this moment referred. This is an age of statistics. I do not place more value upon them than they deserve; but this is, I believe, at least an accurate memorandum. Let us look to the wealth of the City of London. The wealth of the City of London is more than equiva-

lent to that of 25 English and Welsh Counties returning 40 Members, and of 140 Boroughs returning 232 Members. The City of London, the City proper, is richer than Liverpool, Manchester, and Birmingham put together. Or take another and even more pregnant formula. The City of London is richer than Bristol, Leeds, Newcastle, Sheffield, Hull, Wolverhampton, Bradford, Brighton, Stoke-upon-Trent, Nottingham, Greenwich, Preston, East Retford, Sunderland, York, and Salford combined—towns which return among them no less than 31 Members. The City of London has not asked me to insert it in the Bill, which I am asking leave to introduce, for 31 Members. I have heard that there is another measure of Reform, in hands, probably, more able to deal with the subject than myself, and in hands which, perhaps, are much interested in ascertaining the claims of the City of London. Whether the noble Lord has made his arrangements according to the statistical return we shall probably know some day or other; but, as far as I am concerned, the citizens of London have acted with modesty and propriety. They seem to be satisfied with their representation, and to consider that, probably, no place requires a greater number of Members than the City of London at present possesses. Perhaps they have some suspicion that, if they had more Members, they would find some difficulty in obtaining men who were competent to discharge that office.

So much for the population test, and so much for the property test, if you are to reconstruct this House on either of those principles; but, the truth is, that men are sent to this House to represent the opinions of a place and not its power. We know very well what takes place

at a Parliamentary election in this country. The man of princely fortune has, when he goes to the poll, no more votes than the humble dweller in a 10*l.* house; because we know very well that his wealth, his station and his character will give him the influence which will adequately represent his property; and the Constitution shrinks from a plurality of votes in such a case. The Constitution also shrinks from the enjoyment of a plurality of votes by large towns by means of seats in this House. It wants the large towns and cities of England to be completely represented. It wishes to see the Members for Liverpool, Manchester, and Birmingham in their places, ready to express the views of those powerful and influential communities; and it recognizes them as the representatives of the opinions of those places, but not as the representatives of their power and influence. Because what happens to the rich man at a contested election will happen to these places. Why, Sir, the power of the city of London or that of the city of Manchester in this House is not to be measured by the honourable and respectable individuals whom they send here to represent their opinions. I will be bound to say that there is a score—nay, that there are three score—Members in this House who are as much and more interested, perhaps, in the city of Manchester than those who are in this House its authoritative and authentic representatives; and when a question arises in which the interests of Manchester, Liverpool, or Birmingham are concerned, the influence of those places is shown by the votes of persons so interested in their welfare as well as by those of the respectable and respected individuals who are sent here to represent them.

Look at the metropolis itself, not speaking merely

of the City of London. Is the influence of the metropolis in this House to be measured by the sixteen hon. Members who represent it, and who represent it, I have no doubt, in a manner perfectly satisfactory to their constituents,' or they would not be here? No! We all of us live in the metropolis; many of the Members of this House have property, a few of them very large property, in it; and, therefore, the indirect influence of the metropolis in this House is not to be measured merely by the number of Members which it returns to Parliament. So much for that principle of population, or that principle of property, which has been adopted by some, or that principle of population and property combined, which seems to be the more favourite form. It appears to me that the principle, as one upon which the popular representation in this House ought to be founded, is fallacious and erroneous. There is one remarkable circumstance connected with the new school, who would build up our representation on the basis of a numerical majority, and who take population as their standard. It is this—that none of their principles apply except in cases where population is concentrated. The principle of population is, although I cannot say a favourite doctrine, because I do not think it is so, a very notorious doctrine at the present moment; but it is not novel, although introduced at a comparatively recent period into our politics. It was broached in the discussions which took place when the former Reform Bills were brought in by preceding Governments. It was the favourite argument of the late Mr. Hume. His argument for Parliamentary Reform—a subject which he frequently brought before the House—was generally this;—He took some unfortunate borough in the west of England; he described

it as a borough with a very small population and with very little business, and he said:—

This borough returns two Members to Parliament, while the great city of Manchester, with its population of hundreds of thousands, and with half the business of the world concentrated in its circle, only returns the same number. Can anything be more monstrous? Disfranchise the small borough, and give its Members to the city of Manchester.

Such was the argument which for several years passed in this House unchallenged. Mr. Hume brought forward his Motion for Parliamentary Reform in 1852, when, by a somewhat curious coincidence, I was occupying the same seat which I now fill, and it fell to my lot to make a reply to him. I stated then what I had long felt, that although I entirely rejected the principle of population, still, admitting it for the sake of argument to be a right principle, we must arrive at conclusions exactly the reverse of those which Mr. Hume and the school which he founded were perpetually impressing upon the public mind. The principle, in my opinion, is false, and would produce results dangerous to the country, and fatal to the House of Commons. But if it be true—if it be our duty to reform the representation upon it—then I say you must arrive at conclusions entirely different from those which the new school has adopted. If population is to be the standard, and you choose to disfranchise small boroughs and small constituencies, it is not to the great towns you can, according to your own principle, transfer their Members.

Perhaps the House will allow me to refer to a note of some returns which I quoted in 1852, because they are perfectly germane to the argument which I am now offering to the House. When Mr. Hume used the illustrations, a sample of which I have just cited,

I asked him to look to the case of North Cheshire, a county with a population of 249,000; with two great towns, Macclesfield and Stockport, together possessing a population of 93,000, and returning four Members to Parliament, while the residue of the county population (156,000) returned only two Members. I asked him to look to the case of South Cheshire, a county with 206,000 inhabitants, with one town of 28,000 returning two Members to Parliament, but with the rest of the county population (178,000) returning only the same number. I brought before him the remarkable case of South Derbyshire. The population of that county was 166,000. It had only got one town, Derby itself, with 40,000 inhabitants, who returned two Members to Parliament, while the residue of the county population (126,000) had also only two Members. I called his attention to the case of North Durham, with a population of 272,000. There are four great towns, Durham, Gateshead, South Shields, and Sunderland, with a conjoint population of 136,000, returning six Members to Parliament, while the county population of identically the same number (136,000) return only two Members. I referred him to the case of West Kent. That county has a population of 400,000. There are four great towns—Maidstone, Chatham, Rochester and Greenwich,—with a joint population of 172,000, returning seven Members, while the remaining inhabitants, 228,000 in number, return only two. I likewise cited the case of East Norfolk, with a population of 250,000. Two towns, Norwich and Yarmouth, with a population of 100,000, return four Members; but the county residue of 150,000 return only two. I asked him to take the case of the East Riding, with a population of 220,000. Hull and another town return four Mem-

bers; the residue of the county population (126,000) return only two. I told him to look at the West Riding, with its population of 1,300,000 reduced by nine considerable towns to 800,000. Those 800,000 return only two Members; whereas the nine considerable towns, representing a population of 500,000, return sixteen Members. Finally, I referred him to the case of South Lancashire, with a population of 1,500,000. Ten great towns in South Lancashire, with a joint population of 1,000,000, return fifteen Members to Parliament, but the county residue of 500,000 return only two. Why, Sir, it is notorious that, if you come to population in round numbers, 10,500,000 of the people of England return only 150 or 160 county Members, while the boroughs, representing 7,500,000, return more than 330 Members. Admitting, then, the principle of population, which is the principle of the new school, I say you must disfranchise your boroughs, and give their Members to the counties.

Sir, I never heard an answer to this argument. It cannot have been misunderstood, because it was not offered in a corner, but in this House; and I repeat that, although seven years have elapsed since it was advanced, in 1852, I never heard an answer given to it. I have watched the recent agitation, when I was told that a new English constitution was to be created on the principle of population, to see if that argument was answered. It has, indeed, been said that there are some, nay, that there are many boroughs through which the landed interest is represented in this House. That may or may not be a sufficient answer to the demand of the landed interest to be more represented in this House; but it is no answer to the inhabitants of the counties. What proves that my argument is sound,

and enters into the public mind, and is accepted as authentic, is, that the noble Lord the Member for the City in 1854, acknowledged, with generous candour, that it had influenced him in the arrangements which he had made, and a large proportion of the seats—certainly two-thirds—which formerly belonged to the small constituencies that he proposed to disfranchise he transferred to the county representation.

Let us now see, Sir, what will be the consequence if the population principle is adopted. You would have a House, generally speaking, formed partly of great landowners and partly of great manufacturers. I have no doubt that, whether we look to their property or to their character, there would be no country in the world which could rival in respectability such an assembly. But would it be a House of Commons—would it represent the country—would it represent the various interests of England? Why, Sir, after all, the suffrage and the seat respecting which there is so much controversy and contest, are only means to an end. They are means by which you may create a representative assembly that is a mirror of the mind as well as the material interests of England. You want in this House every element that obtains the respect and engages the interest of the country. You must have lineage and great territorial property; you must have manufacturing enterprise of the highest character; you must have commercial weight; you must have professional ability in all its forms; but you want something more,—you want a body of men not too intimately connected either with agriculture, or with manufactures, or with commerce; not too much wedded to professional thought and professional habits; you want a body of men representing the vast variety of the English character;

men who would arbitrate between the claims of those great predominant interests; who would temper the acerbity of their controversies. You want a body of men to represent that considerable portion of the community who cannot be ranked under any of those striking and powerful classes to which I have referred, but who are in their aggregate equally important and valuable, and perhaps as numerous.

Hitherto you have been able to effect this object: you have effected it by the existing borough system, which has given you a number of constituencies of various dimensions distributed over the country. No one for a moment pretends that the borough system in England was originally framed to represent all the classes and interests of the country; but it has been kept and cherished because the people found that, although not directly intended for such a purpose, yet indirectly it has accomplished that object; and hence I lay it down as a principle that if you subvert that system, you are bound to substitute for it machinery equally effective. That is all I contend for. I am not wedded to arrangements merely because they exist; but what I hope this House will not sanction is, that we should remove a machinery which performs the office we desire, unless we are certain that we can substitute for it a machinery equally effective. Now, there is one remarkable feature in the agitation of the new school. It is not that they offer for the system they would subvert a substitute; it is not that they offer us new machinery for the old machinery they would abrogate; but it is a remarkable circumstance that they offer no substitute whatever. They lay down their inexorable principle; they carry it to its logical consequences, and the logical consequences would be

that to this House, in the present state of the population, no doubt you would have men returned by large constituencies who would, in most instances, represent great wealth. I will make that concession;—but when this House is assembled, how will it perform the duties of a House of Commons? I will tell you what must be the natural consequence of such a state of things. The House will lose, as a matter of course, its hold on the Executive. The House will assemble; it will have men sent to it, no doubt, of character and wealth; the great majority of them matured and advanced in life; and, having met here, they will be unable to carry on the Executive of the country. [An hon. MEMBER: Why?] Why? asks an hon. Member. Because the experiment has been tried in every country, and the same result has occurred; because it is not in the power of one or two classes to give that variety of character and acquirement by which the administration of a country can be carried on. Well, then, if this House loses its hold over the Executive of the country, what happens? We fall back on a bureaucratic system, and we should find ourselves, after all our struggles, in the very same position from which in 1640 we had to extricate ourselves. Your Administration would be carried on by a Court Minister, perhaps a Court minion. It might not be in these times, but in some future time. The result of such a system would be to create an assembly where the Members of Parliament, though chosen by great constituencies, would be chosen from limited classes, and, perhaps, only from one class of the community. There is a new school of philosophers, who hold that there is no such thing as progress,—that nations move in a circle, and that after a certain cycle they arrive at exactly the same place,

and stand in precisely the same circumstances which they quitted two or three centuries before. I have no time now to solve a problem of that depth. Questions so profound require the leisure and abstraction of the Opposition benches. But if the population principle should be adopted I should give in my adhesion to the new school of philosophy; and I feel persuaded that the House of Commons, after all its reform and reconstruction, would find itself in the same comparatively ignominious position from which the spirit and energy of the old English gentry emancipated it more than two centuries ago. Therefore I need not inform the House that it is no part of my duty to recommend it to adopt that principle. We cannot acknowledge that population, or property, or even property and population joined together, should be the sole principle on which the legislative system shall be constructed. But before I refer to that part of the subject there appears to me to be one branch of the utmost interest, and which it is my duty rather to touch on before I advert to any other, and that is the state of the franchise. If there be one point more than another on which public feeling has been most shown, it has been in the desire to exercise the suffrage. That was the first claim that was made when the settlement of 1832 began to engage the critical spirit of the nation; and as the prosperity of this country increased, and as its wealth, population, and intelligence increased; as new interests arose, and as new classes were, as it were, called into social existence, that desire became stronger, and it is, I think, hardly necessary to admit that it was founded on a natural feeling, and one which we should by no means infer is entertained by those only who are disaffected with the institutions of the country. On the contrary,

in most instances that desire arises, no doubt, from a desire to participate in privileges which are appreciated.

In considering this question, I would make, first of all, one general observation, as to the object which the Ministry have had in view in preparing their measure of Reform. We have never, in any of the arrangements which we shall propose to Parliament to adopt, considered for a moment whether they would increase or whether they would diminish the constituent body. Our sole object has been to confer the franchise on all of those to whom we thought that privilege might be safely entrusted, and who would exercise it for the general welfare of the country. I will, with the permission of the House, address myself first to the borough franchise. The Reform Act of 1832, acknowledging to a certain degree some of the old franchises of the boroughs, which exist but to a limited extent at present, established the franchise in boroughs on the occupation of a house of 10*l.* annual value. There is a wish—I would once have said a very general wish—that instead of the household suffrage being founded on value, it should be founded by preference on rating. I am not at all surprised that more than one hon. Gentleman has received this observation with marks of assent and sympathy. I confess myself that I was always much biased in favour of that idea. It appears to me that if you could make—to use a common phrase—the rate-book the register, you would very much simplify the business of election; but, when you come to examine this matter in detail, in order to see how it will act, you will find that it is involved in difficulties—great, all acknowledge, and, I am sorry to be obliged to confess, to my mind insurmountable. For the purpose of securing the advantage of having the rate-book the register, you

must, of course, leave perfect discretion to the overseer. The overseer has an interest in raising rates, people may say; or he may be a very hot political partisan. Are you prepared to leave to the overseer the absolute discretion of appointing those who are to exercise the suffrage? Some will say, we must have some check. But what is a check but an appeal? And if you appeal, you cannot do better than appeal to the revising barrister. If you have an appeal to some other parochial officer, you appeal to an inferior tribunal to that which you now enjoy; and, indeed, unless you permitted the overseer to be unchallenged you could not make the rate-book the register. But even beyond this, there are other difficulties which you will find most perplexing. Notwithstanding the Parochial Assessment Act, the rating of this country is most unequal; and it is only those whose business it has been to examine into this subject in its minute details, who can be aware of the preposterous consequences which would arise from adopting a rating instead of a value qualification. Take the present qualification of 10*l.* value, which it is very generally and popularly supposed might be supplied by an 8*l.* rating. Now, let us see what would be the consequence upon the present constituency of adopting an 8*l.* rating instead of a 10*l.* value? I will take the instance of Boston, represented by my hon. and learned Friend behind me (Mr. Adams). The borough of Boston consists of two parishes; the rating of one of them is upon one-half the value, and of the other upon two-thirds of the value. The practical consequence of having an 8*l.* rating in Boston would be to disfranchise 400 of the electors of that borough, who may or may not be supporters of my hon. and learned Friend. Then taking the case of another borough—Dover,—if you had in that borough a franchise based upon 8*l.* rating,

instead of 10*l.* value, you would exactly double the constituency. I have taken these two instances from a great number of others, and the House will see that the idea of establishing a franchise based upon rating instead of upon value, is by no means the simple process it is by some persons supposed to be. The great objection to such a measure, which led us entirely to relinquish all idea of adopting it, is its tendency to disfranchise many of the constituencies.*

I will now proceed to consider the franchise of boroughs based upon a value qualification. The 10*l.* qualification has been severely assailed, and I think the objections to it may be ranged under two heads. First, it is said that there is no principle in a franchise founded on a 10*l.* qualification; and secondly, it is said that a constituency based upon such a qualification must be extremely monotonous. It is said that there is such an identity of interest in a constituency so founded, when we ought to seek for a variety of character, that that alone is an objection; and it has really become almost a phrase of contumely to speak of a constituency as 'only ten-pounders.' I will in the first place touch upon the objection that a 10*l.* borough qualification is one founded upon no principle. Now, I demur to that objection. It appears to me that that qualification is founded on a principle. It is said, 'Why should a man who lives in a 10*l.* house be more fitted for the suffrage than a man who lives in a 9*l.* house?' That appears to me to be no argument. It is a mere sophism and cavil. If it be an argument it is an argument against all tests, and not in favour of a 9*l.* qualification. But the 10*l.* qualification was intended as a test; and the question is, Is it a test that is effective? It is a test easily ac-

* The Union Assessment Act 1862 has provided a remedy for the above-mentioned anomalies.

cessible.; it is a test which, if adopted, is universal in its application; and it is a test which affords a fair presumption that the holder possesses those qualities which entitle him to perform the acts of citizenship. It is, therefore, founded upon a principle; and the objection urged against it appears to be a sophism. The other objection to the 10*l.* qualification is that it gives a monotonous character to a constituency; that from extending the suffrage only to men who live in 10*l.* houses you have merely one sentiment and one class of ideas represented. That appears to me to be altogether a fallacy, resting upon the false assumption that every man who votes under a 10*l.* qualification necessarily lives in a 10*l.* house. But that is not the case. On the contrary, under that 10*l.* qualification all orders of men exercise the suffrage—the most affluent and the most humble. A man who lives in a house worth 400*l.* a year yet votes under the 10*l.* qualification, and, instead of rendering a constituency monotonous, it secures within its range a great variety of interests, of feelings, and of opinions.

But, Sir, I am ready to admit that there are many persons quite capable of exercising the suffrage who do not live in 10*l.* houses, and whom I should wish to see possessing the suffrage. But should we obtain that result by—I won't call it the vulgar expedient, because the epithet might be misinterpreted, though I should not use it in an offensive sense, but by the coarse and common expedient which is recommended of what is called 'lowering the franchise in towns?' Now, I beg the House to consider for a moment what must be the effect of lowering the franchise in towns. Suppose that, instead of a 10*l.* borough qualification, you had a 5*l.* borough qualification?' Well, the moment that you

had a 5*l.* borough qualification you would realise all those inconvenient results which are erroneously ascribed to the 10*l.* qualification. You would then have a monotonous constituency. You would then have a constituency whose predominant opinions would be identical. You would then have a constituency who would return to Parliament Members holding the same ideas, the same opinions, the same sentiments; and all that variety which represents the English character would be entirely lost. You would then have in your borough constituency a predominant class; and certainly the spirit and genius of our constitution are adverse to the predominance of any class in this House. It certainly would be most injudicious, not to say intolerable, when we are guarding ourselves against the predominance of a territorial aristocracy and the predominance of a manufacturing and commercial oligarchy, that we should reform Parliament by securing the predominance of a household democracy. I am convinced that that is not the mode in which you must improve and vary the elements of the present borough constituency. We think, Sir, that there are modes by which that object can be adequately and efficiently attained; and if the House will permit me, I will now proceed to describe them.

We propose to introduce into these borough constituencies new franchises. In the first place we shall introduce as qualifying for the suffrage a class of property which hitherto has not formed an element out of which voters have been created—I mean personal property. We shall propose to allow persons who have funded property, property in Bank Stock, or in East India Stock and Bonds, to the amount of 10*l.* per annum, to exercise the suffrage. I know the objection

which may be urged by some persons against the introduction of this qualification. They will point out the obstacles to a genuine exercise of the suffrage, if that element is introduced. The House will pardon me on this occasion, when I have to travel over a vast field, and when I must confine myself to the chief features of the measure I am recommending to their notice, if I abstain from now entering into that question. Enough for me now to say, that the Bill which I have here, and which, with the permission of the House, I shall introduce, provides, in our opinion, a satisfactory and secure machinery by which this and all other similar franchises to which I am about to advert may be exercised. Now, Sir, there is another franchise which we shall also recommend the House to adopt; and that is one which depends upon the possession of a certain sum in the savings-banks. A man who has had 60*l.* for one year in a savings-bank will, under this Bill, if it become law, be an elector for the borough in which he resides. Again, a man who has a pension for public service, but who has ceased to be employed in that service, whether it be Her Majesty's naval, military, or civil service, to the amount of 20*l.* a year, will, under this Bill, if it become law, be entitled to a vote wherever he may reside. Then, again, Sir, the occupant of a portion of a house, the aggregate rent of which amounts to 20*l.* a year—which would be 8*s.* a week,—will also be entitled to a vote.

The House has heard much of late years of what is called an educational franchise. I am bound to say that no plan for the creation of an educational franchise—in a precise sense of that word—which in their opinion would work satisfactorily, has been brought under the consideration of the Government. It has, indeed, been

proposed that the basis of such a franchise should be sought for among the members of the various learned societies. But, as it has been aptly observed, it does not follow that the members of learned societies should be learned. In these days we frequently see names followed by an amount of alphabetical combination which is almost appalling; yet, though we associate the highest learning, great antiquarian and scientific acquirements, with those persons, it sometimes turns out that they only possess a respectable character and pay ten guineas a year. An educational franchise according to that high empyrean of imagination which some have attempted to reach has baffled all our practical efforts. But it will be our duty to recommend to the House that the privilege of a vote, irrespective of the more formal qualification arising from property, should be conferred upon those classes whose education has involved some considerable investment of capital, many of them, no doubt, exercising the franchise under the previous qualifications which I have described. We have thought it advisable that the suffrage should be conferred upon graduates of all Universities; upon the ministers of religion—whether clergymen and deacons of the Church, or ministers of other denominations,—under regulations which the House will find in the Bill; upon the members of the legal profession in all its branches, whether barristers, members of the Inns of Court, solicitors, or proctors; and upon all members of the medical body who are registered under the late Medical Act. To these we have added such schoolmasters as possess a certificate from the Council.

Sir, there are some other franchises which it is our intention to give to the borough constituencies; but before I touch upon them it will be convenient that I

should call the attention of the House to the subject of the county franchise. Previous to the Reform Act of 1832, the general franchise of England may be described popularly—though technically, perhaps, such a description is not quite correct—as a franchise which in the counties arose from property, and in the boroughs from occupation. When the measure passed in 1832 was first introduced, that distinction was recognised by the statesmen who had the preparation and conduct of the Bill. I have no doubt they deeply considered that question at the time; nor can it be denied that, if the constituencies had remained as they proposed them, the principle thus established would have been a distinct and a clear one. Whether, however, the distinction could have been long maintained, I may with great humility be permitted to doubt. Looking at the expansion of the country, at its vast increase in wealth and population, and not only in wealth and population, but in those distinctive interests which seek representation in this House—remembering the 10,500,000 inhabitants of counties to whom I have already alluded, I venture humbly to doubt whether that distinction could have been long kept up. That its maintenance was convenient to the statesmen of 1832, who had immense difficulties to contend with, I can easily conceive; but whatever was their intention, they were disappointed in the plan which they had prepared, and circumstances occurred in this House which changed the character of the franchise and destroyed that distinction between property and occupation which the Ministry of Lord Grey had sought to establish. Now, the individual responsible for that change was the noble Duke who was my predecessor in the seat which I now unworthily fill; and as his conduct in this respect has

often been challenged, and as there are many who now deplore the course which he then took, perhaps the House will for a moment permit me, who am well aware of the motives which influenced him, to state the reasons which induced Lord Chandos to move successfully in this House the celebrated clause that bears his name.

When the Reform Bill was introduced in the year 1831, it was generally avowed that the object of that measure was to give a legitimate position in the Legislature to the middle classes of England. That was the object avowed by the Ministry, and its propriety was generally acknowledged by the country. Now, when the principle that the middle classes should be fully represented in this House was laid down, Lord Chandos, who was then the member for the county of Buckingham, being a man who lived much among his neighbours, and who was familiar with the character and interests of rural society, naturally felt what he considered a great absurdity, that the most important portion of the middle classes—the most important even at this day, because they are the greatest employers of labour,—I mean the farmers of England—should not possess the suffrage; and it was with that view that Lord Chandos moved the clause. The sympathy of the House was so great in its favour (a sympathy not confined to party—Mr. Hume was a supporter of the Chandos clause) that the noble Lord who then led this House—Lord Althorp—felt it his duty to yield to it. But that happened then which sometimes does happen when great measures are brought forward by a Ministry and an important amendment is introduced successfully by an eager Opposition. Those who have had the preparation of important measures,—and I see present

many upon whom that task has devolved,—know the great difficulty, the long anxiety, the constant hesitation which are involved in such a task, and know how hard it is to adapt one part to another, and to obtain that general harmony which will meet public wants, and which will give you a chance of carrying your measure successfully through. But when a leader of Opposition carries an amendment, which he believes to be necessary, he thinks only of the proposal which he is making to the House, and if the Ministry are obliged to adopt it, it very often does not fit in with their previous design; it does not display the harmony and unison which would perhaps have been the case had they themselves devised it with a due regard for the other details of the measure. I have no doubt that had the Government thought fit in 1831–2 to introduce the principle of occupation in the county franchise, they might have rendered it so homogeneous with their general scheme that it would have worked with perfect facility,—that we should long ere this have been quite accustomed to its operation; and then those distinctions and difficulties which have since arisen might never have been heard of. But there is no doubt that from the moment, or shortly after, this 50*l.* occupation clause was put into operation, feelings of dissatisfaction and suspicion were excited in the minds of the community. Occupiers in the county of less than 50*l.*—say of 40*l.* or 20*l.*,—who, if the principle had not been admitted, would probably never have thought themselves injured, naturally looked with great soreness on the man who had voted in a borough because he had an occupation of 10*l.* That feeling of dissatisfaction was unfortunately followed by those industrial controversies, respecting the origin or end of

which it is unnecessary to say anything, but which were prolonged, and which undoubtedly occasioned great bitterness among all classes. The feeling of dissatisfaction became a feeling of distrust. It was said that commercial changes were prevented in this country chiefly by this 50*l.* tenancy clause. The men who acted under that clause—and, take them altogether, I do not believe that a more fitting class to whom to intrust the franchise could be found—were described in this House as men void of all patriotism and public spirit, exercising the suffrage without the slightest effort of intelligence, merely at the beck of their landlords. Nothing can be more exaggerated or even groundless than the opinions which have been expressed in this House on the effect of the Chandos clause, and on the influence which it has had on popular election. In the first place, voters under the Chandos clause at no time ever exceeded one-fifth of the constituent body of counties. Therefore, had they all voted the same way, they never could have exercised that influence upon public events which has been ascribed to them. But the proprietary of the soil does not rest alone with Tories and Conservatives. There are Whig landlords, and very considerable Whig landlords. The proprietary of the soil is distributed among proprietors of all opinions; and the consequence is, that if you look at the elections, you will find that those who voted under this Chandos clause were much divided—often equally divided. It is not true, therefore, that those who vote under this qualification have exercised any very great influence upon the legislation of this country, or that they are a class who have acted always without intent or meaning. But there is no doubt that dissatisfaction, followed by distrust and misrepresentation, did raise in

the country an idea that the county representation was an exclusive representation; that it was animated only by one object; that it had a selfish interest always before it, and that it had not that sympathy with the community which we desire in that body to whom the privilege of election is intrusted. An effort was made by means of the 40*s.* freehold, which was retained in counties, to counteract the exaggerated influence of the 50*l.* tenancy voters. A manufacture of votes—from the facts before me I am entitled so to call it—was carried on in the boroughs, by which it was supposed that the injurious influence of the tenants living upon the land, dwelling in the counties, might be counteracted. For the last fifteen years—for the last ten years at a very great rate—this has been going on, until it has really arrived at this point, that the number of county voters who do not dwell in the counties now exceeds the number of those who vote under the 50*l.* clause. It was proclaimed with great triumph that when a gentleman stood for a county, his neighbours who dwelt in the county might vote for him, but some large town in the district would pour out its legions by railway, and on the nomination of some club in the metropolis would elect the representative for the county. The dwellers in the county found themselves not represented in many instances by those who lived among them. A sort of civil war was raised in this manner; and if hon. Gentlemen look into the statistics on this point, they will see that what I may call an unnatural state of things was brought about; because there is no doubt that a man should vote for the place where he resides, or for the locality in which he is really and substantially interested. A man who votes for a place where he resides, or in

which he has an interest, votes with a greater sense of responsibility than a mere stranger. Where, then, when we are considering the condition of the constituency of the country, when we are endeavouring to reconstruct it on a broad basis, which will admit within its pale all those who are trustworthy,—shall we look for means by which we may terminate these heart-burnings, and restore the constituencies of England to what I will venture to call their natural elements?

No doubt it is a labour of great difficulty. Are we to attempt to do it by restrictions?—by artificial arrangements? It might be possible to pass a law which would remove these strangers from the sphere of their political power. But, whether possible or not, who would be rash enough to propose it? How could we terminate these misunderstandings, how restore that good feeling—that which Lord Chancellor Clarendon called the 'good-nature of the English people'—if we took a course which would give occasion to a perpetual agitation for the removal of the restrictions which we had succeeded in establishing? Her Majesty's Government have given to this subject the most anxious consideration. I may say, that if labour, if thought, could assist us to arrive at a proper solution, neither labour nor thought has been spared. Is there any principle on which we can restore the county constituency to its natural state, and bring about that general and constant sympathy between the two portions of the constituent body which ought to exist? Her Majesty's Government are of opinion that some such solution does exist. We think there is a principle, the justness of which will be at once acknowledged, the logical consequences of which will be at

once remedial, and which, if applied with due discretion, will effect all those objects which we anxiously desire with respect to the county constituency. We find that principle in recognising the identity of suffrage between county and town.

I will proceed to show the House what, in our opinion, would be the practical consequences of recognising that identity. If the suffrages of the town are transferred to the county, and the suffrages of the county transferred to the town, all those voters who, dwelling in a town, exercise their suffrage in the county by virtue of a county suffrage, will record their votes in the town, and the freeholder, resident in a town—subject to provisions in the Bill which would prevent this constitutional instrument being turned to an improper use,—will have a right to vote for the borough in which he resides. This, as well as the franchise founded on savings-banks, will open another avenue to the mechanic, whose virtue, prudence, intelligence, and frugality entitle him to enter into the privileged pale of the constituent body of the country. If this principle be adopted, a man will vote for the place where he resides, and with which he is substantially connected. Therefore the first measure would embody this logical consequence, that it would transfer the freeholders of the town from the county to the town.

But if this principle be adopted, there are other measures which, in our opinion, it would be the duty of Parliament in this respect to adopt. Since the year 1832 there has been a peculiar increase in the population of this country irrespective of the ratio of increase, with which we are acquainted. The creation of railways in particular districts has stimulated that increase; and

this has come to pass in England, that in a great many of the boroughs there is a population residing, who, for all social and municipal purposes, are part and parcel of the community, but who for Parliamentary purposes are pariahs. A man votes for a municipality; he pays his parochial rates and taxes; he is called upon to contribute to all purposes of charity and philanthropy in the borough; but, because he lives in a part of the borough which exceeds the boundary that was formed in 1832, he is not, though he lives in a 10*l.* house, permitted to vote for members of Parliament. Now, all this extramural population in fact and in spirit consists of persons who ought to be electors in the boroughs in which they reside; and we therefore propose that Boundary Commissioners should visit all the boroughs of England, and re-arrange them according to the altered circumstances of the time. I know that the title of Boundary Commissioners may cause some alarm in this country. I know there are traditions of party arrangements effected by that machinery which, whether true or not, left an unpopular recollection in the House of Commons. I believe that in the present state of public feeling on this subject, so moderate as it is, and in the present balanced state of parties, no partial or improper conduct of that character, if it ever did take place, could be repeated. But it is quite unnecessary for me to dwell upon this point, because Her Majesty's Ministers are so circumstanced, that they can, in that respect, make a proposition to the House which will at once divest it of all suspicion. Since the Reform of 1832, machinery has arisen in this country perfectly competent to effect that which we believe to be so necessary—I mean the Enclosure Commission. Its members are a body of men independent of party;

and we purpose to delegate to them the fulfilment of this office. They will appoint Deputy Commissioners, who will visit the boroughs. The Deputy Commissioners will make their reports to the Secretary of State, the Secretary of State will embody them in a Bill, and that Bill will be subjected to the criticism of this House. After that, no one can for a moment suspect that there will be any opportunity of making arrangements favourable to any party.

The House has a right to ask me whether Her Majesty's Government have formed any estimate of what may be the consequence of the change which we propose in the number of the county constituencies. That is, no doubt, a point upon which one must speak with some degree of hesitation; but there are some materials in existence which are furnished by the papers before the House, and there are others which are at our command. This morning there was put into my hand a pamphlet—probably a proof—published to day. It is by a gentleman who ranks, I believe, among the most eminent statistical authorities in the country, who is well known to Gentlemen in this House, and who has often been examined before our Committees—Mr. Newmarch. Mr. Newmarch estimates that the gross increase that would be occasioned in the county voters by a 10*l.* county franchise would be 103,000. I have no time to ascertain what are the data on which Mr. Newmarch makes his calculation, but I should be disingenuous if I did not acknowledge to the House that the estimate formed by Her Majesty's Ministers is much more considerable. I should suppose the addition to the county constituency would be not less than 200,000, one-half of which would be furnished by what statisticians call the north-western and the south-

eastern groups of counties—that is to say, Cheshire, Lancashire, and the West Riding on the one hand; and Kent, Sussex, and part of Surrey, on the other. With reference to those gentlemen who have on various occasions expressed their opinion that a 20*l.* occupation franchise is one which they should prefer to see adopted, I would observe that the number between a 20*l.* and a 10*l.* franchise would, I think, be described by the figures 100,000. But, with reference to the change of the county constituency from 50*l.* to 20*l.*, I would venture to observe that, having given to this subject very considerable pains, so far as I can form an opinion, there is nothing which would make me trust the loyalty and respectability of one who lived in a 20*l.* house in a county, in preference to one who lived in a 10*l.* house. I am also bound to say that the estimate of 200,000 voters has been made irrespective of what the effects of the labours of the Boundary Commissioners may be. I have heard many arguments against this proposition, but only to one of them would I attach much weight, and to that not for its strength, but for the phrase which is used to clothe it. I allude to the objection that the identity which this proposition would introduce between the county and the town constituencies, may lead to what are called 'electoral districts.' Now, if the only protection of the English people from electoral districts is a difference of 10*l.* in an occupation franchise between the county and the town; then I am afraid that electoral districts cannot be resisted. But believing, as I do, that there is nothing more unpopular in this country than electoral districts, and that they are alien to all the customs, manners, and associations of the people, I have no fear whatever that that scheme will be adopted until Englishmen have lost

all pride in their country and all fondness for the localities in which they have lived. Why, Sir, electoral districts can never be established until you recognise the voice of a numerical majority as the right principle of representation in this House. They can be formed upon no other principle; and the measures which it is my duty to introduce on the part of the Government to the House to-night have no other object but to assert these contrary but, as we believe, right principles upon which the representation in this House has always been based.

I have now, very imperfectly, and omitting many points, placed before the House a general view of what we propose to do with the constituent body of the country. Our object is to reconstruct that body, with no mere view of increasing its numerical amount, but solely with the object of improving it, by the addition of various classes and individuals to whom the privilege of the franchise may be trusted with safety to the State and benefit to the community. If the measure we recommend be adopted, you will have a great homogeneous constituency, with much variety of character—for variety in the franchise is perfectly consistent with identity of the suffrage; you will have a great homogeneous body, between the different sections of which there will no longer exist feelings of dissatisfaction and distrust. The elector will choose a man of the community in which he lives, and he will exercise the right under the high sense of duty that influences Englishmen in performing it. I have always thought the ideal of the constituent body in England should be this:—It should be numerous enough to be independent, and select enough to be responsible; and that is the constituency Her Majesty's Ministers believe will

be formed by the measure I propose to the House to-night.

Having laid before the House the character of the elective body it becomes me to state how we propose it shall be registered, and how it may vote. The House is aware that under the present system there is a difference in the method of registration in counties and boroughs. In counties, an elector makes his own claim to be placed on the list; in boroughs, the list is made out by a public officer. It is well known that great difficulty attends the county registration; nothing proves it more than the fact that, notwithstanding the increase in the population and wealth of the country, the county registration is a decaying one. This must always be the case if you surround it with every obstacle. We propose to amend that system entirely; we propose, in fact, that there shall be a self-acting registry. The overseer in every parish will make out a list of owners as well as occupiers. I believe there will be no difficulty whatever in doing it, and clauses will be found in the Bill to ensure its accomplishment. If any one is omitted from the list, whether owner or occupier, he may make his claim, and in a supplementary list his name will be inserted and sent to the clerk of the peace, and the revising barrister. That is the great change we propose with regard to registration. There are other regulations of considerable importance, but I have still some points to allude to; and though the House has treated me with much indulgence, I feel I must not dwell on this head.

Now, being registered, how is the elector to vote? We wish to put an end to those scandals that have of late years been discussed in the House, and the bitter feelings and controversies raised by the question—Are

the travelling expenses of electors to be paid by the candidates? Is there no mode of terminating for ever what may be a scandal, and is always a controversy? When we are reconstructing the constituent body of the country, and completing its representation in this House, is it not the fitting occasion to make an effort, not merely to improve the registration, but to insure the registered vote being given in the simplest and safest manner we can devise? We propose, in the first place, that the number of polling places throughout the country shall be greatly increased. We propose that in every parish containing 200 electors there shall be a polling place. If a parish does not contain 200 electors, then it will form one of a group reaching that number, which will have a polling place. Every man who votes will vote at the place where he resides, wherever his qualification may be. To effect that object, there will not only be a qualification register, but a residence register. It may be said these additional polling places will be a great expense to candidates; but the Bill provides that candidates shall not bear the expense of them. If left to the candidate, the expense would be very heavy; if left to the county, it will be very little. Where there is a petty Sessions, there is generally a Police Station, or a room that may be hired; and there are provisions in the Bill which will satisfy hon. Gentlemen that this can be effected in a reasonably cheap manner.

If a man chooses to vote as he always has voted, he may go to the polling place of his district and do so; but we propose also to allow the elector to vote, though he may not choose to go to the poll, that he may vote by what are called voting papers. This is not an experiment, or a thing adopted for the first

time,—there is nothing empirical about it. For many years the people of this country have been familiar with it: in the election of Poor Law Guardians, the votes are taken by voting papers; the Metropolis Act, recently passed by the House, provides that the elections under it may be taken by voting papers. What is the result of giving this supplementary power to a constituency? Why, it renders the expression of public opinion more complete than under the existing system. Of the constituent body under the Poor Law Act, 90 per cent. records its votes; but, in the great electoral body of England called on to elect the representatives of the British people, and form this famous House of Parliament, that affects the opinions of the world, how is that high privilege treated? Not more than 50 or 60 per cent. of that constituency records its votes in the performance of that solemn duty.

But it may be said, voting by papers may lead to personation; as if there was no personation now! In the history of man there never was any improvement proposed which the interests and passions of some would not distort; we believe the electors can vote by polling papers without personation, and in an honest and satisfactory manner. Sir, I shall always go myself to the hustings; but if a man wishes to vote for his Member by a voting paper, instead of going to the hustings, I see no objection to his being allowed to do so. All he will have to do is to write to the public officer and ask for a voting paper, the form of which will be found in the schedule of this Bill. A voting paper will be sent to him by the public officer in a registered letter; and, therefore, you will have evidence of its transmission. He will sign this paper in the presence of two witnesses, one of whom must be a householder, and then return it to the

public officer, also in a registered letter. Thus we shall have evidence of its transmission both ways; and the paper will be opened before the proper authorities, and the man's vote will be duly recorded. I believe a vote given by this instrumentality may be honestly and properly given, and that there will be no more deception or personation practised under this machinery than under the open system which at present prevails. But lest there should be any personation, we provide against it by making it a misdemeanour under this Bill.

I have now placed before the House—much more briefly than I ought, perhaps, to have done, but they will pardon me if, in consequence of the largeness of the theme, I may omit some of the details which will be found in the Bill,—I have now placed before you the leading features of what we propose to do with the registration of the constituent body, and the method in which their votes shall be taken. I have next to touch upon a certainly not less important portion of my subject. In attempting to deal with the question popularly designated Parliamentary Reform, Her Majesty's Government have endeavoured, so far as their intelligence could guide them, to offer a proposition to the House which, consistently with their conception of the principles upon which the English Constitution is founded, should secure for this country a complete representation. One of our first considerations was, of course, the electoral body, upon which I have treated at such length. But a complete representation does not depend merely upon the electoral body, however varied you may make its elements, however homogeneous its character. It also depends upon whether, in your system, the different interests of the country are adequately represented. Now, discarding for ever that

principle of population upon which it has been my duty to make some remarks; accepting it as a truth that the functions of this House is to represent not the views of a numerical majority—not merely the gross influence of a predominant property, but the varied interests of the country, we have felt on this occasion it was incumbent on us diligently and even curiously to investigate the whole of England, and see whether there were interests not represented in this House whose views we should wish to be heard here; and whether the general representation of the country could be matured and completed. In undertaking this office, it must not be supposed that we have been animated by a feeling that we would only do that which the hard necessity of the case required. Had we been so influenced, it is possible we might have brought forward a measure that would have served the purpose of the moment, and yet left seeds behind us which might have germinated in future troubles, controversies, and anxieties. We have been sincerely desirous to adapt the scheme of 1832 to the England of 1859, and to induce the House to come to a general settlement, whether as regards the exercise of the franchise or the direct representation in this House of the various interests of the community which should take this question for a long period out of the agitating thoughts of men. We have sought to offer to the country, in the hope that it will meet with its calm and serious approval, what we believe to be a just and—I will not say a final—but conclusive settlement. Finality, Sir, is not the language of politics. But it is our duty to propose an arrangement which, so far as the circumstances of the age in which we live can influence our opinion, will be a conclusive settlement. And we have

laid it down as our task to consider, without any respect to persons, what we honestly think are the interests of the country that are not represented, but which we should at this moment counsel the House to add to their numbers.

I venture to divide this branch of the subject into the cases where there is a want of representation, and those where a representation exists, but not an adequate one. We find both of these circumstances characteristic of the West Riding of Yorkshire and South Lancashire. There, there are distinct interests which are not represented in this House, and some also which are very inadequately represented. I mean by the term 'inadequately represented,' to say that there are several distinct interests, while the present Members are returned to this House by the predominant interest; the other interests, which are considerable enough to challenge and claim our consideration, being virtually unrepresented. We propose, therefore, to add to the representation of the West Riding of Yorkshire four Members. Here I will not speak of population or property, because we are not about to offer a proposition to the House formed merely upon population or property. In the West Riding we find a great territory seventy miles in length, which is purely agricultural. We find another great division studded with towns, none of them important enough, or having distinctive interests powerful enough to be represented, yet in their aggregate constituting a wonderful hive of industry and energy; and there is still another portion of the West Riding where there are blended and varied interests. We propose, therefore, to add four Members to the West Riding of Yorkshire, and to divide it, not according to a mathematical arrangement

as to population, but according to its separate interests. This principle of division will be in accordance with the local demarcations of wapentakes. If property be the test, the property here is identical; for, however varied is the number of their population, the property of the wapentakes is as follows:—We propose that there should be a West Yorkshire, with a population of 472,000. That is the division in which you will find Keighley, Dewsbury, and a score of towns which you cannot summon here, but which, if you adopt these principles for your constituent body, would be voting for county Members; and therefore they ought to vote with the distinct interest with which they are connected. We propose that there shall be a North-West Yorkshire, with a population of 129,000, and a South Yorkshire, with one of 225,000. We propose these divisions, instead of an endless division and sub-division without names, which is little in harmony with our habits, and because these are the names which are used in the locality. With regard to the property of these divisions, varying as they do in interest and population, its amount is almost identical in each. In one of them the annual assessment to the county rate is 963,000*l.*, in another 809,000*l.*, and in the third 808,000*l.*

We propose to add two Members to South Lancashire —that is to say, we propose to distribute the county of Lancashire into three divisions. One will be the hundred of West Derby, and one the hundred of Salford. These divisions are the same as those proposed by the noble Lord the Member for London, except that one of the hundreds of North Lancashire was inserted in West Derby in his Bill, and it now remains with North Lancashire. This will be an addition of six to the number of county Members.

There is another county to which we propose to add two Members—that is, the county of Middlesex—which we propose to divide. By dividing Middlesex, the claims of Kensington, and Chelsea, and Hammersmith, and other suburban districts, the claims of which have been urged in this House, will be provided for. They will form part of South Middlesex, while the distinctive interests of the other portion of the county, the northern division, will also be represented in this House. These are all the additions that we propose to make to the representation of the counties—eight Members.

It is now, Sir, my duty to call the attention of the House to those places which, because they possess distinct interests, which are not duly represented in this House, ought in our opinion to be represented here. The first place which, in our opinion, ought to be represented in the House of Commons is the town of Hartlepool and its immediate district. There is no place in England more distinguished by the energy of its inhabitants, its rapid progress, and the character of its industry. In North Durham there are four great towns which are represented, and there are two county Members; in South Durham there are two county Members and no town which is represented. I will not dwell on the population of Hartlepool; I will not rest the granting of a Member on that basis, though the population is very considerable—upwards of 30,000; but I rest it upon the rapid development of its considerable industry, and the very fact that at this moment its importation of foreign goods is larger than that even of Newcastle. We, therefore, propose that there should be a Member for Hartlepool. For the same reason that it is a place where the shipping and mercantile interest of the country are conspicuous, we

are of opinion that Birkenhead ought to be represented. There is a part of Staffordshire which we think deserves and requires the consideration of this House. It is that district which is called 'The Black Country,' where an immense distinctive industry has arisen since the passing of the Reform Act; and we therefore propropose that West Bromwich and Wednesbury shall return a Member to this House. I said that we had allotted only two additional Members to South Lancashire, because we thought that there were two towns in that county whose interests require to be represented in this House, and therefore we recommend that Members should be allotted to Burnley and Stalybridge. That will be five additional borough Members.

Turning now to the South of England, we find a place in Surrey, which ought to be represented—namely, Croydon; and in the county of Kent we propose that a Member should be allotted to Gravesend—a very ancient town, with a distinctive character, and in every sense of the word, I think, entitled to a representative. Now, Sir, I will not say we have studied the map of England—we have done more than that; at this moment I declare that, if you are to complete the representation of England according to the principle which influences Her Majesty's Ministers—the principle that this House is to represent not the numerical majority, but the interests of the country—I do not see any other Member required to complete that representation; and I believe that if we have erred, we have erred rather by anticipating the destiny of what I believe will in time be great and thriving communities.

Well, Sir, how are these fifteen Members to be supplied? That is the question. They are to be supplied in the spirit of the English Constitution. Adopting a

policy which has been recognised on previous occasions, and which for two centuries has been adopted by the Sovereigns and Parliaments of England—assuming, in which I hope I am correct, that it is the opinion of this House that its Members ought not to be increased, we must find the means of representing these new interests as means have been found before under similar circumstances and in the same constitutional spirit. It is sometimes said that there are constituencies in this country so small that it is an indefensible anomaly to permit them to exist. ['Hear, hear!' *and a laugh.*] I entirely disagree with the Gentleman who cheered me. I do not think that better arguments can be urged in favour of a constituency of 1,000 than one of 500; and I should be very much surprised if the hon. Gentleman, ingenious as he may be, could urge them. There are, it is true, some constituencies which certainly cannot be defended if the numerical majority is to govern England; but there are some very small constituencies which may perform a very important part in the representation of the principles upon which the English Constitution is founded, which are still upheld in this House, and still revered in this country. I will take an instance. In all those rattling schemes of disfranchisement with which we were favoured during the autumn, when every gentleman thought he could sit down at his table and reconstruct the venerable fabric of the English Constitution—if there was one point more than another on which these Utopian meddlers agreed—if there was one enemy which they were all resolved to hunt to death—it was the borough of Arundel. There every vice of the system seemed to be congregated—a small population, a small constituency,

absolute nomination. Well, now, Sir, that is very well for autumnal agitation; but let us see how it practically works in this ancient and famous community in which it is our pride and privilege to live. There are 900,000 Roman Catholics in England, scattered and dispersed in every town and county,—of course a minority. What means have they of being represented in this House, especially in the present, as I deem it, unfortunate state of feeling in England with regard to our Roman Catholic fellow-subjects? There is one English Roman Catholic Member of Parliament, a man who bears a name that will ever be honoured by England and Englishmen: and practically, and in the spirit of the English constitution, the 900,000 Roman Catholics of England, men, many of them, of ancient lineage and vast possessions, whose feelings all must respect, even if they do not agree with them in every particular, find a representative in the borough of Arundel. That is the practical working of our constitution. You talk of the small numbers of the constituency of Arundel. 900,000 Roman Catholics! Why, it is more than the West Riding of Yorkshire; it is double the Tower Hamlets.

Therefore, Sir, we are not to say, because a constituency is small, that is the source from which we must inevitably draw the constitutional means of completing the representation of England. The House will do me the justice of observing that by the measure which, on the part of the Government, I have placed before them to-night, whatever arrangements may be made with existing boroughs to find means of effecting the representation of interests not represented without increasing the numbers of this House, no man will be

disfranchised. By adopting this principle of identity of suffrage, even if a man loses the Member who has represented his borough, he still may go to the poll or send his voting paper; and, under all circumstances, that is a compensation which was never offered in previous schemes of Parliamentary Reform. We do not feel it our duty to recommend to Parliament that any borough represented by a single Member, like Arundel, should lose that Member. We want, in order to complete the representation of the country, fifteen seats in this House. To procure those seats we must fix upon some rule that must necessarily be arbitrary. The only condition that the House has a right to make, and which all should be glad to concede, is that that rule should be impartially applied. In the last census, if you throw your eye over its Parliamentary results, you will find that there are fifteen boroughs represented by two members each, and the population of which is under 6,000. Only fifteen boroughs? It will be an admirable opportunity for a display of patriotism—an opportunity seldom offered by the circumstances and occasions of society—to the Members of those places. I have no personal feeling on this subject. I do sincerely and ardently hope that when there is a new Parliament we may all meet again; but if these fifteen boroughs now represented by two Members each, though with a population under 6,000, would consent, without our using force to compel them, to make this concession, we should complete the representation of the country according to the principles that I believe to be those upon which our representation ought to rest.

Therefore, Sir, in the Bill, which soon will be in the hands of Members, there are provisions that the fifteen

boroughs in question shall in the next Parliament be represented by only one Member each. [*Cries of* 'Name, name!'] The House, I am sure, will consider my feelings. I shall take care that every Gentleman, I hope to-morrow morning, will receive the schedule containing the names of these boroughs; but I see no necessity, while I think it would be invidious, to mention them now. [*Cries of* 'No, no' and 'Name!'] I regret to be compelled to introduce personal details into this statement; but as the House insists upon it, I suppose I must read the names of the boroughs which, at present represented by two Members, are in future to return only one each. They are Honiton, Thetford, Totnes, Harwich, Evesham, Wells, Richmond, Marlborough, Leominster, Lymington, Ludlow, Andover, Knaresborough, Tewkesbury, and Maldon.

I have now, Sir, touched upon those topics which it was my duty to lay before the House this evening. I have omitted many things that I ought to have said, and I have no doubt I may have said some things that I ought to have omitted. Such errors are inevitable in treating so large and so various a theme, but I am sure the House will remember that there will be many opportunities for me to enter into necessary explanations, and will treat an occasion like the present with generous forbearance. Sir, having described as clearly as I could the principal provisions of our Bill to the House, I shall say no more. I believe that this is a measure wise, prudent, and adequate to the occasion. I earnestly hope the House may adopt it. I believe, Sir, it is a Conservative measure, using that epithet in no limited or partial sense, but in the highest and holiest interpretation of which it is capable. I can say

sincerely that those who framed this measure are men who reverence the past, are proud of the present, but are confident of the future. Such as it is, I now submit it for the consideration of the House of Commons, convinced that they will deal with it as becomes the representatives of a wise and understanding people.

FEBRUARY 28, 1859.

In reply on the Motion for the introduction of the Government Reform Bill.

Among many other speakers, MR. BAXTER, MR. HEADLAM, LORD JOHN RUSSELL, MR. ROEBUCK, MR. BRIGHT, and MR. BENTINCK took part in the debate.

THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER: Sir, in replying on a Motion for the introduction of a Bill, the duties of a Member are generally confined to answering enquiries made in the course of the debate; and I will, in the first place, notice those that have been made during the discussion this evening. The right hon. Gentleman the Member for Radnorshire (Sir George Lewis), who followed me, enquired what the intentions of the Government are with respect to the seats obtained by the disfranchisement of Sudbury and St. Albans. The intention of the Government with respect to those seats is, that they should still remain in reserve, and probably, in the course of our discussions on the Bill now before the House, there may be opportunities of deliberating on the best mode of apportioning them. The hon. Gentleman the Member for East Sussex (Mr. Dodson) asked me whether the Government could give any estimate of the reduction of the constituency by transferring the borough freeholders from the county. Sir, there are two Returns, I believe, on the table of the House already on that subject; the amount of those voters has been accurately stated by another hon. Member of the House

in the course of the debate; and I believe the last Return is 105,000. The same hon. Gentleman asked me whether the 40*s.* freeholder will vote for the borough in which he resides. He will vote for the borough in which he resides if his 40*s.* qualification is within that borough.

Mr. DODSON: But supposing the 40*s.* qualification is not within the borough?

THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER: Then he will have the advantage of polling by means of a voting paper. Again, I am asked whether it is intended that an elector who is an occupier of a 10*l.* house, and who is also a 40*s.* freeholder in the borough where the 10*l.* house is, is to have only one vote. Sir, it is intended that he should have only one vote, and I think one vote ought to satisfy his ambition in electing the representative of the town in which he lives. An hon. Gentleman enquired of me whether I could give him any calculation of the number of voters that will be added to the constituency by the different schemes which I have introduced to-night. It will be impossible to give any estimate that can be absolutely relied on. The increase, in our opinion, will be very considerable, exceeding half a million, as we believe; but the suffrage will really depend so much on the energy of individuals—so many, I think, will be invited by these avenues being thrown open to them for advancing to the possession of the suffrage—that it is totally impossible to give that dry statistical estimate of the number which you could have if it depended merely upon property, occupation, or rating, and which could be ascertained from returns. The hon. Member for Hull (Mr. Clay) asked whether the cost of polling-places for boroughs as well as that of those for counties was to be defrayed by the locality.

It will be found that by this Bill such is not to be the case wherever, as we contemplate will frequently occur, a public room suitable for the purpose can be obtained without any expense. We do not propose that the candidate should be freed from that expenditure which is a legitimate one; but I think that if the hon. Member paid 400*l.* for polling-places at the last election for Hull, his accounts ought to have been scrutinised with more severity by the election officer. The hon. Member for Cambridge (Mr. Steuart) enquired whether by a 10*l.* qualification in counties is meant only a qualification which arises from the possession of a house. The Bill means a qualification of 10*l.* which arises from the occupation of lands or tenements. The hon. Gentleman the Member for Southwark (Mr. John Locke) denounced the Bill on account of the innovation of restricting, for the first time, the votes of borough freeholders to the locality in which their qualification arises; and this was the point at which the discussion, leaving the course, usual on such occasions as the present, when hon. Members generally restrict themselves to enquiries, took a new turn. The moment it passed the gangway, enquiries ceased, and the debate afforded opinions upon the measure. I do not the least complain of that, but I am sure that hon. Gentlemen will not object to my discriminating the character of the debate. Below the gangway, opinions are given upon the measure; above the gangway, there are merely modest enquiries as to its intent. The hon. Gentleman who complained that he had to-day travelled 200 miles to hear my speech, and was extremely disappointed with it (Mr. F. Crossley), said that he and his friends wish to maintain myself and my friends in power until they are prepared to take our places. But he added that of

all the grievances under which they are suffering at present, the deficiency which they most experience is a want of leaders. Now, Sir, I think that, after the discussion of to-night, that want can hardly be felt. The noble Lord the Member for the City of London (Lord J. Russell), the hon. and learned Member for Sheffield (Mr. Roebuck), and the hon. Member for Birmingham (Mr. Bright), have announced themselves as the leaders of the movement; and, represented by men of that character, authority and experience, I do not think that the hon. Gentleman who travelled 200 miles to-day can regret the great effort which he has made.

The noble Lord the Member for London has not hesitated a moment in expressing his opinion upon this Bill. He has two objections, which at once decide his course upon the subject. The noble Lord had the advantage of being acquainted with the provisions of this Bill, before they were detailed by me in the House to-night.* He must have become acquainted with them through that corrupt agency to which the hon. Member for Birmingham alluded. All I can say with respect to that transaction is, that I witnessed the publication of that information with dismay; and I should have thought that the hon. Gentleman and the noble Lord would have acquitted me, of all Members of Her Majesty's Government, of any combination of that kind; for anything more suicidal than to consent to that revelation before making the statement which I have had to make, and which by the indulgence of the House, and

* On the morning of the day on which the Reform Bill was introduced by Mr. Disraeli into the House of Commons, the Bill had been published in 'The Times:' a circumstance very injurious to his statement, and which could only have been accomplished by a flagrant breach of faith, yet undiscovered.

almost to my own astonishment, I have succeeded in making, I cannot conceive. Well, Sir, the noble Lord rests his opposition to this measure on two grand principles. First of all, he cannot consent to any measure which disfranchises in counties the ancient freeholds which have existed for 300 or 400 years. I have had to look into this subject, and I am sorry to say that the great majority of the freeholds which I have considered are not of that ancient duration. They are of much more modern days, and have been created in a much simpler and more manufacturing style than the territorial traditions of the noble Lord seem to contemplate. 'But,' says the noble Lord, 'I will never consent to it; I will never be party to a Bill which disfranchises the hard-working man.' What did the noble Lord do in his last Reform Bill? What was the first feature in his last Bill? Why, a proposition to disfranchise all the freemen in England. So much for this principle of the noble Lord. A great and perilous innovation to restrict the borough freeholders to vote in the locality in which their qualification exists! Why, if I mistake not, it was part of the first Reform Bill. It was advocated by Lord Althorp, then the leader of the House of Commons; and in the very interesting and able speech made by my hon. Friend the Member for Northamptonshire (Mr. Knightley) last year, in the course of the debate upon the Motion of the Member for Surrey (Mr. Locke King), the attention of the House was recalled to these very circumstances. Lord Althorp, when he brought forward the Reform Bill, was in favour of providing that the freeholders who resided in boroughs should vote where their qualification was found. The noble Lord says that he is for mixing the county and the town. He knows nothing more to be

deprecated than that we should prevent the people of the towns going to vote in the counties. I also am in favour of that blending of interests. I know nothing more advantageous than that people should go from the towns and vote for the counties, but let them vote for qualifications in the counties. But, Sir, what happened in 1832? Why, it was the carrying of the Chandos clause alone that made Lord Althorp say that he would no longer insist upon the borough freeholders being restricted to their towns. It was in consequence of votes being given to 50*l.* tenants-at-will that that resolution was arrived at. And yet this is a great and perilous innovation! It is an innovation which has been discussed in this House often and often; that was projected by the political colleagues of the noble Lord, and which has, I believe, been accepted by the good sense of the country for a considerable period. It is clear that the moment you consider the country franchise in the spirit in which, on the part of the Government, I have attempted to consider it to-day—the moment you put an end to that exclusive character which has been complained of in this debate, you must give the counties, not to any particular order or exclusive class, but to the inhabitants of the counties, and those who have a substantial local interest in them; and I feel persuaded that the justness of this arrangement, the logical sequence, as it is, of recognising the identity of the suffrage, will not meet with that fate which has been predicted for it by hon. Gentlemen below the gangway, but will be accepted by the good sense of the country.

Another hon. Gentleman, the Member for Oldham (Mr. W. J. Fox), has complained that nothing is done in the Bill for the working classes; and the

hon. Member for Birmingham (Mr. Bright) has confirmed that complaint, and enforced it with all his vigour of expression. What we have done for the working classes may not sound so large as some of the plans which are commonly advocated for their advancement. There is nothing more easy than to make a speech, and say that you are in favour of the working classes, and that you think they ought to have this power and that privilege; but then you (the Opposition) never pass any measures to do anything for the working classes. The working classes will, I think, be sensible of the advantage which they will derive from this measure, which I hope and believe will pass. Here are two avenues to the constituent power open to all working men who possess those qualities which would entitle them to exercise that power—the savings' bank suffrage and the 40*s.* freehold. The hon. Gentleman (Mr. Bright) tells me that we know nothing of the working classes, and arrogates to himself the peculiar privilege of being acquainted with their wants, wishes, and requirements. He says that I can know nothing about the working classes, and that I only talk to my friends behind me, and that they know nothing about the working classes. My friends know much more than the hon. Gentleman thinks, and I can assure him that I do converse with others than my friends, and that I have as good means as he has of learning what are the feelings of the working classes. I will tell the hon. Gentleman the things that have been represented to me, on what I believe to be the very best authority, and from members of the working classes most distinguished by their personal and moral qualities and intelligence. There were two things which they impressed upon me. Not knowing of the 40*s.* franchise,

they said that that which they valued most of all was the savings' bank suffrage; and that in which they had the least confidence was the propositions of the hon. Member for Birmingham. They told me that they could not trust the hon. Member for Birmingham; they were not satisfied that under his plan the working men would exercise that privilege. But they said—We clearly understand what a savings' bank suffrage means. We may invent more, we may devise other schemes, but this is a great boon, and one that will be much appreciated by the working classes. I believe, Sir, that is the case.

Now, it is not necessary for me to trespass upon the House at any length. An hon. Gentleman (Mr. P. O'Brien) has asked me to-night what I intend to do about Ireland. Well, I thought Ireland had had a Reform Bill very recently; that it had a boon which England had not enjoyed, nor Scotland. I understood that it had worked to the satisfaction of Irish Members, and I am sure that Irish Members have on several occasions expressed themselves satisfied with it; but the Government have no prejudices upon this subject; they are prepared to consider the case of Ireland, and, in fact, have considered it; and I can assure the hon. Member, in due season, after some other Bills have progressed, when this Bill has been read a second time, and the Scotch Bill has been launched, we shall have much satisfaction in submitting an Irish Bill. But the most remarkable circumstance in this discussion has been the complaint of Scotch Members, and of one in particular (Mr. Craufurd) that the Government have treated the Scottish people in a cavalier manner. Now, I took the greatest pains this evening to guard the interests and vindicate

the position of Scotland. I showed the hon. Gentleman opposite that if any new principle of Reform were adopted, Scotland might probably be disfranchised to an alarming extent. I showed him that if he continued to support his friends among whom he generally sits, probably Scotland would not be represented by more Members than the Metropolitan districts, and that the surplus representations would be given to the constituents of the hon. Member for Lambeth (Mr. Roupell) who has just addressed us. It is not fair or just to allege that the Government have treated Scotland in a cavalier manner.

There is one point yet remaining to which I must advert, and that is, to fix the period when I shall ask the House to read this Bill a second time. Upon that subject, I am in the hands of the House. The Government desires to consult the feelings of the House. Had I followed my own inclinations, guided only by general considerations of public business, I should have asked the House to allow me to move the second reading on this day fortnight. If the House will consent to that day, I will fix it for that time; but I am bound to say that representations have been made to me by hon. Members upon the other side which it would not be fair for me, after what has occurred, to treat with silence, that I should name this day three weeks; but I leave that point to the House to decide. The Government are prepared to fix this day fortnight. It must be either that or this day three weeks, for the Government measure of finance must be considered. [*Cries of* 'Three weeks.'] It is, then, the understanding that I shall move the second reading of this Bill upon this day three weeks. I trust, Sir, that when that Motion is made it will be successful.

MARCH 31, 1859.

On the Second Reading of the Government Reform Bill.

LORD JOHN RUSSELL proposed a Resolution, "That this House is of opinion that it is neither just nor politic to interfere, in the manner proposed in this Bill, with the Freehold Franchise as hitherto exercised in the Counties in England and Wales; and that no readjustment of the Franchise will satisfy this House or the Country, which does not provide for a greater extension of the Suffrage in Cities and Boroughs than is contemplated in the present measure."

THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER: Mr. Speaker, after seven nights' debate, conducted with a vigour and variety which have sustained the reputation of this House, it is now my duty to examine how far that measure which, five weeks ago, I had the honour to introduce on the part of the Ministry, has been affected by this discussion, and to indicate the course which Her Majesty's Government think it their duty to recommend to the House this night to adopt with respect to it.

Sir, it is some ten years since, or nearly so, that the Prime Minister of this country, then the leader of this House, occupying the very seat which I now fill, and being one of the principal promoters and projectors of the Reform Act of 1832, announced the deliberate opinion of himself and of his Cabinet to be that the famous settlement of 1832 was, in their judgment, no longer satisfactory and sufficient. And,

Sir, from that period unto the present, with successive Ministries formed from different parties, the same opinion has been held, the same advice to Parliament has been given. The Crown has been pledged—the Parliament has been pledged—the Ministry has been pledged—to attempt to amend the representation of the people; but this is the first occasion on which a Bill with that object has been offered to this House for the second reading; and how am I met under these circumstances?

Now, Sir, what is this Bill which I have introduced? It is founded on three great principles. And we have had so much discussion about principles and about details that the House will permit me to remind it what those three great principles are. The first principle is, that the constituent body of this country shall be increased by the introduction to it of a large number of persons, and of a vast variety of the population, who shall in future possess the suffrage. Under this Bill, in pursuance of that principle, I believe as great an addition would be made to the constituent body as was made by the Reform Act of 1832. By the Reform Act of 1832 I believe 400,000 persons were added to the constituency. By the Bill which I introduced to the House five weeks ago, I believe that a number certainly not less than that will be added to the present electoral body. The second principle on which this Bill is founded is that those large communities whose wealth and population and distinctive character have been developed since the Act of 1832 shall be summoned to direct representation in this House. That is the second great principle. The third principle is that this Bill maintains generally the present borough system of representation in this country, on the ground that no

efficient substitute has yet been offered for it; and on the ground also that it is the only means by which you can obtain an adequate representation of the various interests and classes of the country; and that all other proposed changes would only lead to the predominance of a numerical majority of the population. Now, Sir, these are the three great principles upon which this Bill is founded. All the rest, however important—all the rest is matter of detail, which ought to be, and can only be sufficiently discussed in Committee. The hon. and learned Member who has just addressed us (Mr. Roebuck) put to me a question, and called upon me frankly to reply to it. Sir, I will frankly reply to it. I say that every proposition in the Bill, irrespective of the three great principles upon which it is founded, is a matter of detail; that the Committee is the proper stage in which to discuss those propositions, and that to the discussion of those propositions in Committee I and the rest of the Government will give a candid consideration. But whether the point be a great one or a small one—whatever view the hon. and learned Gentleman may take of it—I decline to pledge myself before the discussion takes place, and say that I will defer to any determination that the Committee may arrive at. Sir, that appears to me to be a demand alike unreasonable and unparliamentary.

Sir, I have reminded the House what are the three principles upon which this measure is founded; and I may be permitted to say that I believe a majority, and a large majority, of this House is in favour of those three principles. Now, if this be the case, I should naturally have felt surprise at receiving a fierce opposition to the second reading of the Bill. With the conviction I have that a majority of the House is in

favour of the principles on which this Bill is founded, I had a right to count on success on the second reading. But we are not permitted to bring the question to that issue. With a majority of this House in favour of the principles upon which this Bill is founded, this measure is not to be tried upon its principles; but a Resolution is thrust, Sir, into your hands, which asks the House to commit itself on two points, which are, after all, points of detail ['Oh, oh!'] which are unquestionably, as I will show, points of detail, and which ought to be considered in Committee. What are the two objections to which the Amendment of the noble Lord refers? I will touch upon one, certainly of the least importance, with regard to what the noble Lord calls the disfranchisement of freeholders. Now, I cannot agree that any freeholder is disfranchised by this Bill. I think I might, with equal justice, say that the Bill provides for the enfranchisement of freeholders; but for the sake of discussion I will take the statement of the noble Lord. But is this the first Bill to amend the representation of the people in which there has been a measure of disfranchisement? The noble Lord has had great experience in Reform Bills; will he refer me to any Bill with which he was ever connected in which there was not a large measure of disfranchisement? Why, Sir, in the Bill of 1831 and 1832 the whole constituent body of the cities and boroughs of England, amounting in number to nearly 100,000 persons, was partially or completely disfranchised. Why, Sir, the noble Lord was not content on that occasion to propose the disfranchisement of the whole constituencies of all the cities and towns of the kingdom, but he carried on that occasion to a great extent the disfranchisement of the freeholders in the counties. Every freeholder who

lived in one of the great towns that then was first summoned to Parliament, found, to use the language of the noble Lord, that the Bill disfranchised him as a freeholder of the county, and he became afterwards a voter for the borough in which he resided only in right of occupation. Sir, I received this morning a letter from a gentleman which is really excessively germane to this point. It will be recollected that some hon. Members who followed the noble Lord, like the right hon. Gentleman the Member for the University of Oxford, in solemn accents warned us of the unconstitutional character of our proposition to allow the freeholders to vote for boroughs. Now, the Gentleman to whom I am referring, writing to me this morning, states that he lives in Bristol. This is a city, and, as is known, a county also, like several other great towns in England. The freeholders of Bristol vote for the city by virtue of a statute, nearly the oldest on our books. This Gentleman, I say, informs me that he is a freeholder, and votes for the city. He is, however, not a freeholder by virtue of the ancient statute some 500 years old; but it so happened that when the Reform Bill passed in 1832 the boundaries of Bristol were greatly enlarged, and many county freeholders were brought within the liberties of the city. My friend and correspondent was one of those; and, according to the noble Lord's interpretation, and through the noble Lord's arrangement, he was disfranchised as a freeholder and became merely an elector for the city of Bristol. But I am bound in fairness to tell the noble Lord that my correspondent is peculiarly pleased with that arrangement. He assures me that nothing was more pleasing to those freeholders who in a large county were nobodies, to find themselves changed into important persons in a

city. The information received from other parts of the country similarly circumstanced is in accordance with that sentiment. Will the noble Lord deny that in all his Bills of 1831 and 1832 disfranchisement, as he calls it, was absolutely carried out on no very small scale? But what would the noble Lord have thought if, when he brought forward his great measure involving such important interests, and dealing with such large questions, he had been met by the Opposition of that day by a Resolution that the disfranchisement of the freeholders was such an unconstitutional course that it was impossible for the House to consider the question of the improvement of the representation of the people?

What has been the conduct of the noble Lord in his subsequent Bills? Has not the noble Lord himself proposed the disfranchisement altogether of the existing freemen of the country to the number, I believe, of nearly 50,000? Has not the noble Lord brought in a measure, to ensure, as he alleged, the representation of minorities in Parliament, which would have the effect of depriving many of the county electors of their third votes? Some hon. Members might have considered those proposals—some did consider them—as rather objectionable arrangements; but, at all events, they were looked upon as matters of detail; nobody then met the noble Lord by a Resolution such as he has now brought forward, in order to carry away the attention of the House from the great principles involved, by asking the House, by way of censure upon the general scheme, to commit itself to mere points of detail.

Let me now, Sir, touch upon the much more important portion of the Resolution. But though it is the more important portion of the Resolution, let me remind the House it has been elicited in the course of

our debates, that it formed no part of the original instrument when it was first concocted in order to embarrass the Government.

But before I consider the subject of the amount of the borough franchise, it is absolutely necessary for me to place before the House, for the vindication of the Government, the particulars of the course they have taken. In doing so, it is requisite for me to touch for a moment upon the question of the county franchise. Now, there have been, no doubt, in the course of this prolonged debate, frequent expressions of opinion, and from persons of authority, in favour of the county franchise being fixed at the amount of 20*l.* I believe, Sir, I am only fairly stating the case when I say that amongst us all there is no question between a 50*l.* franchise and one of any other amount; but the real question is between an occupation franchise for the county of 20*l.* and one of 10*l.* I admit there have been frequent declarations of opinions by persons who ought to exercise, from their experience and ability, great influence in this House, in favour of a 20*l.* occupation franchise for counties. Now, let us for a moment consider what the House has already done on this subject, and what has taken place in respect to it in the course of late years. In 1851 the noble Lord was Prime Minister of this country. An hon. Gentleman, a Member for a county (Mr. Locke King) had for some time previously brought under the consideration of the House the county franchise. It was then commencing to be a Parliamentary question of importance. In 1851 that hon. Gentleman brought forward a Motion for leave to introduce a Bill which would have reduced the occupation franchise in counties to the amount of 10*l.* The noble Lord at the

head of the Government resisted that Motion. The Motion was, however, carried by no inconsiderable majority, and the noble Lord resigned in consequence. It is very true, that, from circumstances not anticipated, the noble Lord again returned to office in the same year. But the noble Lord when he returned to power, having acknowledged that it was in consequence of the adverse majority in respect to the question of the county franchise that he had resigned office, then announced that he and his colleagues had resolved to take the whole question of the representation of the people into their consideration; the noble Lord intimated his intention of introducing a Bill into the House as a general and comprehensive measure on the subject; and upon that undertaking, and that undertaking alone, the followers of the noble Lord no longer pressed the question, upon which they had already obtained a majority.

In 1852, the noble Lord, in fulfilment of that pledge, after taking a whole year to consider the question with his colleagues, introduced his comprehensive measure of Parliamentary reform, in which every point was well weighed, and among the rest that of the county franchise. But the noble Lord on that occasion still resisted the policy advocated by the Motion of the hon. Member for East Surrey, and proposed a 20*l.* occupation franchise for counties. The measure obtained no favour when it was introduced, and shortly after its introduction the Government of the noble Lord was broken up. Now the House will recollect that in 1851 the noble Lord's Government was destroyed by an adverse vote on this subject of the county franchise; and that in 1852 he gave no adhesion to the principle, and his re-constructed Administration

did not exist more than a fortnight after the introduction of his measure. I think, Sir, it was in 1853 that another Government was formed. The country then appeared to be tired of Whig Governments—they were tired of Governments that did not possess the confidence of a majority of the House. No one could say how the question could be solved how a working majority could be obtained; and after the defeat of the noble Lord's Government and the defeat of Lord Derby's Government, it was resolved that means should be taken to establish a Government which not only by the commanding talents of its Members, but by the general consent of the House, should conduct the affairs of the country with an administrative ability not hitherto experienced, and should settle all great public questions by the exercise of those qualities of intellect which statesmen of the highest class could alone possess.

Well, Sir, that Cabinet was formed, and it counted amongst its Members the most distinguished men, some of whom were the companions of the late Earl Grey and were Members of his Cabinet when he constructed the original Reform Act. There were also in this Cabinet some of the favourite and most favoured friends of the late Sir Robert Peel. There were others greatly distinguished also. There was in this Cabinet of which I am now speaking unquestionably a combination of ability that had seldom been brought together in one Council chamber. So great was the confidence of the country and this House in this Coalition Cabinet that, although at the moment they acceded to office they announced that their attention would be given to the question of reform with the hope and intention of settling it,—I will not say finally and for ever—but in a manner which would satisfy this and

perhaps the succeeding generation—the confidence, I say, of the country and of Parliament was so great in his Cabinet that they accorded to them a period of time not less than twelve months, in order that they might not be hurried in their deliberations, and that they might be better enabled to offer to the House the matured results of their wisdom, of their experience, and of their investigation. Well, then, what did they do? These distinguished men having devoted all their genius and intellect and time to this great question, did come forward in due season with a large and comprehensive measure of Parliamentary reform. They met almost every question that was really and practically involved in that theme. They proposed a very considerable redistribution of seats, and a disfranchisement of small constituencies; they also proposed a reduction of the borough franchise. And what was the result at which they arrived in respect to the county franchise? With respect to the county franchise, after deliberating upon the question for a year, this Cabinet of eminent men, presided over by a statesman of European fame, but of Tory education, arrived at this result; they recommended to Parliament to establish in the counties a 10*l.* occupation franchise.

Now, who were the men who recommended in 1854 this principle of a 10*l.* occupation franchise? Why, Sir, among these councillors were many of the most distinguished members of this House. The noble Lord was, of course, there, and was the organ of the Government by whom the measure was brought forward. There was the right hon. baronet the Member for Carlisle (Sir James Graham). There was also the noble Viscount the Member for Tiverton (Viscount Palmerston). There were, also, as Members of that Cabinet, the right hon.

Gentleman the Member for Wiltshire (Mr. Sydney Herbert) and the right hon. Gentleman the Member for the University of Oxford (Mr. Gladstone). Are we, Sir, to suppose—considering all the circumstances under which these distinguished Members of the Cabinet acted—that they were trifling with this important subject? Can we, Sir, believe for a moment that they would have given their assent to that proposition unless they had bestowed their most serious attention to the subject, with a due sense of the responsibility they had undertaken? We know, Sir, now—for the matter is no secret, I can refer to it without difficulty—we know, I say, that there was discord and dissension in the Cabinet upon this subject of reform. That Cabinet was also so unfortunate upon it, as to lose a colleague, though more fortunate than ours, that colleague returned to them. The retirement of the noble Viscount the Member for Tiverton, in the autumn, proved that the decision at which the Cabinet had arrived was not hastily formed, but that it was a question which they had considered with much pains, and with the fullest sense of their duty. Now, I ask, did the noble Viscount quit the Cabinet on account of the 10*l.* franchise? If so, he must, by his returning back to the Cabinet, have been fully convinced by the arguments of his colleagues. If the noble Viscount quitted the Cabinet on account of the 10*l.* franchise proposed, why did not his distinguished colleagues who shared his opinions follow his example? Yet, Sir, to my surprise, it is from the lips of those Gentlemen I now hear that the solution of all these difficulties is to be found in the proposition, acceptable, they say, to the majority, of a 20*l.* franchise for counties. Surely after the Government of 1853, on a full and deliberate consideration

of their responsible situation, had given in their adhesion and approbation to the 10*l.* franchise, they must have felt how far they had by so doing advanced public opinion to sanction a proposition, which before that time had been supported only by the sympathies of the hon. Member for Surrey's followers in the House of Commons. And now, Sir, on this subject we are told that the counsels given by our two late colleagues* are the counsels which would be acceptable to the present House of Commons. I very much esteem the eloquence and abilities of my two right hon. Friends, whose assistance I have lost in this emergency; but I fear they might have spoken frequently and at much length without producing the effect they have under present circumstances, if, remaining Members of Lord Derby's Cabinet, they had at this time supported a proposition for a 20*l.* franchise in counties.

But, Sir, I must pursue the history—for it is an instructive one—of this 20*l.* franchise. The Bill of the Cabinet of Lord Aberdeen containing the 10*l.* franchise for counties, was withdrawn in consequence of the war then impending, and which shortly afterwards broke out. That war for the moment diverted and distracted all men's minds from the consideration of this subject. There was a change of Government and there was a new Prime Minister; and when peace returned and all the joys of peace accompanied it, the 10*l.* occupation franchise in counties was again a Parliamentary question. Well, it had been said that when the Government of 1851 was upset by that very Motion, the vote was not a fair expression of the opinion of the House of Commons.

* Mr. Walpole and Mr. Henley, who had just seceded from the Cabinet of Lord Derby, mainly on the question of the County Franchise.

It was said that the division had been taken on it unexpectedly, and that the Minister had been surprised. No doubt, had these been the real circumstances, the noble Lord the Member for the City of London, who knows the House of Commons as well as any man, would not have felt it his duty to resign. The noble Lord knew well that the subject was one upon which his party were divided: he looked for no warm support on our side; and therefore he knew it was impossible to resist the question. But that was not the position of the noble Lord the Member for Tiverton when he became First Minister. Then came out what had been suspected, but not known, that the noble Lord the Member for Tiverton, though he had given his adhesion to the proposition of Lord Aberdeen's Cabinet, was in heart a supporter of the higher franchise; and when he became First Minister, and the question was again mooted, he declared that all the resources and energy of his Government should be employed to defeat the proposition for the reduction to 10*l.* The noble Lord knew that from our side he would receive a generous and hearty support. I must remind the House that in the meantime there had been a dissolution of the House on the China question, which had considerably reduced the Conservative ranks; but the noble Lord knew well that we would support him. We did so. Every effort was made to support him. With pairs, 230 or 240 Gentlemen sitting on this side supported him; and in a very full house the Motion of the hon. Member for Surrey was defeated by a majority of 13! And when the next morning I revised the division list for my own instruction, I found that the aid which the noble Lord with all his efforts and energy had brought to that division might be

described by the figures which denoted the majority! There is yet one stage more in this eventful history.

The time came when we sat last year on these benches, and the hon. Member for Surrey again brought forward his Motion; and when he did so, I moved the Previous Question on the ground that the Government of Lord Derby was about to consider the whole question. But the same courtesy was not accorded to me as, under similar circumstances, we accorded to the noble Lord. Subsequently, on the second reading of the Bill, at a period of the evening favourable to the assembly of hon. Members, every effort was made to resist the Motion. My hon. Friends near me looked with the greatest anxiety to the noble Lord the Member for Tiverton. They had an idea that with his aid we should have been saved. The noble Lord the Member for Tiverton gave them no encouragement. Several of my hon. Friends upbraided the noble Lord as if he had ill-treated them in the hour of need. I did not sanction that. I knew the position of the noble Lord. A division was called for, and the Motion was carried by a large majority. The noble Lord himself voted for it; but, Sir, I was informed, on the highest authority,—and, indeed, it was no secret—that had the noble Lord accompanied us into the same lobby he would have been followed by only four Members of his party. Sir, I mention these facts to show the impracticability of proposing a 20*l.* franchise to this Parliament. I do not pretend to say that that was what influenced us. I believe the proposition would be impolitic. But when, night after night, we have been asked why we did not propose a 20*l.* franchise, and that by statesmen who, in the responsible position of Ministers of the Crown, had counselled the House to adopt a suffrage

of a different character, I am obliged to show the House how—irrespective of its impolicy—how impracticable such a proposition would be. What would be our position if we had proposed a 20*l.* franchise? I can tell you in a moment what it would be. The struggle that is now taking place would have taken place on that point, and I think with much greater advantage to the noble Lord, because then he would have been the champion of the House of Commons, whose deliberate and recorded opinions would have been outraged by our proposition; and no doubt the noble Lord would have carried his views against the Government. What would be our position had we followed the noble Lord's present advice, so contrary to his former policy, and now even smiled at with demureness by the hon. Member for Birmingham? Our position would have been this—had we proposed a 20*l.* franchise for counties and a 6*l.* for boroughs, we should have been obliged to commence our labours in Committee—had we ever got there—with a 10*l.* franchise for counties and a 6*l.* for boroughs.

That leads me to the very question of the borough franchise. Had we acted in accordance with the advice that is now so liberally given to us by those who never practised it themselves, we should have been offering a measure to Parliament proposing a 20*l.* franchise for counties and 6*l.* for boroughs. I must now inquire whether we could with our view of what was our duty, have made a proposition of that character. Let us consider such an extension of the borough franchise as that recommended by the noble Lord. We have on this subject had in the present debate the opinions of several very eminent statesmen, including men of different schools of politics. There was my right

hon. friend the member for the University of Cambridge. He is in favour of a 20*l.* franchise for counties, and would like at the same time a 10*l.* franchise for boroughs; but feeling that something must be done, he says that he has no objection to consider the question of a 6*l.* rating franchise for boroughs. Then we come to the noble Lord the Member for Tiverton. He is still steady in his affection for a 20*l.* franchise in counties; and he does not conceal his complete respect for a 10*l.* franchise in boroughs; but he says the noble Lord the Member for the City got him in a corner and showed him his Resolution.* He tells us that, having looked at it, he said, 'We can act together; there is nothing in your Resolution that I cannot support.' I quite concur with the noble Lord the Member for Tiverton. So far as the Resolution is concerned, by entering into this combination he makes no engagement which, as regards the borough franchise, will at all embarrass him. I am perfectly aware of all the tricks of management by which you can deal with the borough franchise: how you can manage to be doing a very liberal act, and yet keep out of the franchise the very class for which so many persons express

* This celebrated resolution, when first drawn by Lord John Russell, consisted only of the first portion, which refers to the freehold franchise. Lord Palmerston and his friends would not support anything further: the advanced Liberals insisted on a resolution which should pledge the House to a considerable reduction of the suffrage. Lord John Russell, who then sat below the gangway, and was not then in political relation with Lord Palmerston, had the rejected amendment in his pocket for ten days; when, at last, by the intervention of Sir James Graham, the amendment assumed that well-known form on which the future Prime Minister placed a convenient interpretation, but which has, on the whole, proved so distasteful and embarrassing to the great body of the Liberal party.

so much sympathy. I have all these plans in my pigeon-holes, and could have availed myself of them with perfect impunity. An 8*l.* rating franchise, which some fancy would disfranchise half the constituency: a 7*l.* rating franchise would do better than a 10*l.* value; and even a 6*l.* rating franchise, well doctored, might do your business. The noble Lord is not pledged to any of these by what was shown him in the Resolution. The simple alteration of any of what he calls our 'fancy franchises,' most of which he proposed himself, would have entirely redeemed the pledge of the noble Lord. I do not know any one who could reduce the borough franchise in a truer Conservative spirit than the noble Lord. But, Sir, I will describe fairly and fully the propositions and the policy of my right hon. Friend and the noble Lord. I will take them as representing the school of politicians who support the scale of 20*l.* in the county and 6*l.* in the borough. That is called, and may be called by courtesy, the Conservative policy. I think, Sir, it is a feeble and dangerous policy, and because it is feeble and dangerous, I think it also a foolish policy; but still it is a Conservative policy, and it is supported by my right hon. Friend and the noble Lord.

But now let us advance to the propositions of other statesmen on this point, and see how they agree; because it is of great importance that we should understand what harmony on this point exists among these various critics of the measure of the Government. I will not be so unjust to the noble Lord the Member for the City as to estimate his policy by his Resolution. His Resolution is a party Resolution, drawn up in the spirit of party. I do not blame him for that. He draws up a Resolution in terms which will allow as

many men as possible to support him; but the noble Lord as a statesman, must have a policy. He would not play and trifle with the Parliament of this country; and therefore I of course assume that he has a policy. I think he fairly describes that policy in his speech—so far as one can get at a precise declaration of a policy from a speech—as one which would admit to the franchise the great body of the working classes. Well, Sir, I think there is some system in that policy; but I wish we had something more of the detail; that we could have obtained from the noble Lord an idea of the means by which the great body of the working classes should be admitted. That omission I regret. But, Sir, what we wanted was soon supplied by a very explicit and remarkable speech, which was delivered some time after that of the noble Lord—I mean the speech of the right hon. Gentleman the Member for Carlisle (Sir James Graham). I must say that that right. hon. Gentleman addressed the House on this subject with great precision, and furnished the House with a programme sufficiently distinct, and one which I think the country will understand. Well, Sir, the disfranchisement of small boroughs, the extensive redistribution of seats, is the first article in the efficient programme of the right hon. Gentleman the Member for Carlisle. Then, not maintaining the phrase 'an extension of the franchise,' the right hon. Gentleman proposed a 'reduction' of the franchise—not an inconsiderable reduction of the franchise—not less, as I collected from the right hon. Gentleman, than that very municipal franchise, at the least, into the very enormities of which a Committee of the other House is at this moment inquiring. Last, but certainly not least, with some courteous reluctance—adopted, I suppose,

out of compliment to the House—the doctrine was introduced, with prescient approbation, of the election of Members of Parliament by ballot. I was not so astonished by the programme of the right hon. Gentleman as some were, for I remember a speech delivered on the hustings of Carlisle some years ago, from which we clearly understood—though it appeared afterwards that we were mistaken—that the right hon. Baronet had already adopted those opinions. I wonder whether the vision of the hustings of Carlisle has come across him to-day. However, there is a programme distinct and clear; and no man, however liberal his opinions or independent his position, but must say at last he has found a leader, and one who will forward a measure he will conscientiously support.

But, then, there was in this speech of the right hon. Gentleman an admission not less important than the political programme, which in my opinion may exercise a considerable effect on the political fortunes of parties in this country. And what was the admission? Why, that he was one of the parents of the Resolution of the noble Lord the Member for the City. Quoting metaphors from the turf is now the fashion, and therefore I may say without offence, and without being misunderstood, that the right hon. Gentleman and the noble Lord are clearly confederates in this matter, for it appears that the resolution was contrived by them together; and what is the irresistible, the inevitable inference, but that the noble Lord is pledged to the programme of the right hon. Baronet? Well, then, we have now a leader—or we have leaders—with a definite programme—large disfranchisement of small boroughs, extensive redistribution of seats, great reduction of borough franchise,

municipal suffrage at the least, and vote by ballot more than probable. This, then, is the programme of the right hon. Baronet the Member for Carlisle and the noble Lord the Member for the City. Practically speaking, I do not see what is the difference between their political system and that of the hon. Member for Birmingham. The Member for Birmingham has stated out of doors—colouring this statement more highly than we are in the habit of doing in this assembly, and confessing as he always does with the frankness of his nature that he would take less than he asks, and asks sometimes less than he wishes—some views which may seem to exceed the programme of the confederates. But I have no doubt that the hon. Member for Birmingham, as a practical man, has no objection whatever, on these conditions and for the purpose of obtaining these results, to act with the noble Lord and the Right hon. Baronet in any manner and in any place. Then, as for what are called the ulterior views of the hon. Member for Birmingham, the Throne may not always have been spoken of perhaps by the hon. Gentleman the Member for Birmingham with that reverence which I believe all Englishmen feel for it; the House of Lords may, by chance, have been denounced as a nuisance to the country; the Ecclesiastical establishments of the country may not have altogether received his approbation;—but although the noble Lord and the right hon. Gentleman may not yet be so advanced, or if so advanced may not yet choose to announce their opinion, we know that in all Cabinets there may be open questions; and practically speaking, on this programme I think there is no reason why the hon. Member for Birmingham may not act as the trusty and honoured colleague of the right hon. Baronet

and the noble Lord. We see then, there is an advantage in Parliamentary debate; we see that we have arrived in this discussion at great results; we know something more of the opinions of individuals; we see somewhat more clearly the future of parties in the country; but what surprises me most is the combination of eminent men, with such opposite opinions and such opposite projects, against her Majesty's Government. What I cannot reconcile is the mild Conservative policy of 20*l.* in the counties, and some slight extension of the franchise in boroughs, advocated by the noble Lord the Member for Tiverton, by my right hon. Friends, and the distinguished colleagues of my Lord Aberdeen—I say I cannot reconcile that with the avowed, the determined, almost the flagrant, policy of the confederates and the hon. Member for Birmingham.

And now, Sir, how are we met upon this question? An hon. Gentleman, a friend of mine, who made a speech on the first night of this debate, the member for Dorsetshire (Mr. Sturt), of whose talents I have so good an opinion that I believe he would not have made that speech on the last night of the debate, says that he is not afraid of the people of England; whereupon there is great cheering from hon. Gentlemen opposite; and I doubt not that if the sentiment had been uttered so well and so forcibly at any of the minor theatres it would have been received with applause still more enthusiastic. My hon. Friend might have stopped and made two enquiries. He might have asked, What are the people? and why should I fear? Why, Sir, I have no apprehension myself that, if you had manhood suffrage to-morrow, the honest, brave, and good-natured people of England would resort to pillage, incendiarism, and massacre. Who

expects that? But—though I would do as much justice to the qualities of our countrymen as any Gentleman in this House—though I may not indulge in high-flown and far-fetched expressions with respect to them like those we have listened to, for the people may have their parasites as well as monarchs and aristocracies—yet I have no doubt that, whatever may be their high qualities, our countrymen are subject to the same political laws that affect the condition of all other communities and nations. If you establish a democracy you must in due season reap the fruits of a democracy. You will in due season have great impatience of the public burdens combined in due season with great increase of the public expenditure. You will in due season reap the fruits of such united influence. You will in due season have wars entered into from passion and not from reason; and you will in due season submit to peace ignominiously sought and ignominiously obtained, which will diminish your authority and perhaps endanger your independence. You will in due season, with a democracy, find that your property is less valuable, and that your freedom is less complete. I doubt not when there has been realised a sufficient quantity of disaffection and dismay, the good sense of this country will come to the rally, and that you will obtain some remedy for your grievances, and some redress for your wrongs, by the process through which alone it can be obtained—by that process which may render your property more secure, but which will not render your liberty more eminent. I know that I shall be told that these are old-fashioned notions. The hon. Member for Birmingham has said the same on the platform, which he is always praising and certainly adorns; he will point to the instance of

the United States of America, and say, 'This shows how completely erroneous are the notions entertained in Europe of democracy.' But I say, between Europe and the United States there is no sort of analogy. I say the United States of America are colonies; for a country, though independent, does not cease to be a colony; and they are not only colonies, but they are absolutely colonising, and none of the conditions obtain in them which regulate the social system of the ancient communities of this quarter of the globe. That being my opinion, I cannot look upon what is called reduction of the franchise in boroughs but with alarm; and I have never yet met any argument which fairly encounters the objections that are urged to it. You cannot encounter it by sentimental assertions of the good qualities of the working classes. The greater their good qualities the greater the danger. If you lay down as a principle that they are to enter the constituent body, not as individuals, but as a multitude, they must be the predominant class from their number, and if you dwell on their intelligence, you only increase the power they will exercise.

Now, Sir, we had to consider this question when we settled the point of the county franchise. We laid down for ourselves this as an object which we in our mixed Government ought to attain with respect to a constituency. I made the observation when I first addressed the House on this subject; and I only make it again because the hon. Member for Dover (Mr. B. Osborne), who was not present, I believe, when I spoke, misconceived my statement, and ascribed what I said to only a borough constituency. I spoke of the great national constituency when I said that 'it ought to be numerous enough to be independent, and select enough

to be responsible.' Now, how is that to be attained? We thought we could attain that result by the introduction of a variety of franchises which should introduce numerous classes into the constituency with different pursuits and with different interests, and we felt that by the establishment of the same occupation-franchise in counties and in boroughs we should prevent the introduction of the mere multitude, which, if once we began the reduction of the borough franchise, would ultimately and speedily be accomplished, and at the same time supply means by which the most intelligent and the most meritorious of the working classes could enter into the great national constituent body. And was the policy not sound? Was it not a wise and effective policy? It requires no argument from me to establish that position or to enforce that rule. Why, the admission of the hon. Member for Birmingham the other night is conclusive on that point. What was his objection to this miscalled identity? He said, 'if you have the same franchise in counties and towns, I see but very little chance of your ever reducing the suffrage in towns.' Why, that was the very object we wished to attain, and it is something to have such an admission from the hon. Member for Birmingham himself.

Mr. BRIGHT: I said, 'more difficult.'

THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER: It is a great deal to have such an admission. When he tells us that there is 'more' difficulty, it shows that he sees in its establishment a barrier and a bulwark to the promotion of his plans, and he of course would object to the establishment of a very large constituency, homogeneous, united, no longer with jealousy existing between its different classes, but at the same time a

body so elastic and so expansive from the variety of its franchises, from the different kinds of property introduced, that it would be always increasing with the increasing prosperity of the country, and no man of common industry and intelligence would be shut out from the electoral privileges.

But to this policy three objections have been urged in this debate. The noble Lord objects to it, because he is against what he calls 'uniformity of franchise'—a phrase that never escaped my lips. And he has used that phrase with respect to a measure containing the greatest variety of franchises that ever was included in a Reform Bill! Personal property, for the first time, is completely admitted as a qualification for the electoral privilege. There is scarcely a class and scarcely a species of property which is not considered in this unprecedented variety of franchises; and yet the noble Lord rises to say, 'I oppose the Bill because I object to a uniformity of franchise.' Then, Sir, the noble Lord is against uniformity of franchise in counties and boroughs. But how has the noble Lord dealt with this matter? He has spoken throughout this debate as if it was an innovation unknown and unprecedented in our political annals. 'It is unconstitutional; it is noxious; it is pernicious; it is unjust;' and for this reason he opposes our Bill in his speeches—and yet he never refers to the point in his Resolution. There is nothing in his Resolution against the uniformity or identity of franchise; because you may reduce or extend the franchise, and yet may preserve uniformity; but in his speeches the noble Lord is extremely vehement against this unheard-of, this unconstitutional system, which, according to the right hon. Member for the city of Oxford (Mr. Cardwell), would be the destruc-

tion of our constitution. What has the noble Lord himself done on this subject? What was the course pursued by the noble Lord the advocate κατ' ἐξοχήν of Parliamentary Reform? The noble Lord, as a member of Lord Aberdeen's Government, as the principal organ of the Government by whom that mature plan of Reform was introduced, proposed on that occasion five new franchises, with the consent of the right hon. Members for Wiltshire, Carlisle, and the University of Oxford, and also with the consent of the noble Viscount the Member for Tiverton. He proposed five new franchises, and at the same time that they should be alike extended to counties and boroughs. So much for identity and uniformity! The noble Lord failed for the moment in his praiseworthy attempt; but that was a policy which announced that the noble Lord was in favour of identity of suffrage in county and town; in favour of a great variety of franchises, and that they should be enjoyed equally by borough and by county. The noble Lord was extremely disappointed by the failure of his second Bill for Parliamentary Reform, and he made an announcement in this House which I well recollect—that he was convinced the time had gone by when, on subjects of Reform, what are called general and comprehensive measures could be passed; and he therefore intended to devote himself in future to the support of the measure introduced by the hon. Member for Surrey. The noble Lord acted consistently with that declaration, for he has voted invariably in favour of that Motion, which establishes an identity between the borough and the county suffrage. So, therefore, in the proposal for five franchises, which by accident failed, and in the systematic policy that he has pursued since, the noble

Lord has exhibited a consistent determination to support that very principle of identity or uniformity (as he erroneously calls it) of suffrage which now he denounces as an unheard-of innovation.

Then, Sir, the second objection to this Bill is that, under the policy which we recommend, the working classes are not considered. I have already incidentally touched upon that objection. I say that the working classes are admitted under the system that we propose in a manner which would be satisfactory to them when brought into operation, and in a manner consistent with the principles of our constitution. Hon. Gentlemen have talked as if the working classes at this moment had nothing to do with the suffrage; but from information that reaches me I find that a great portion of those who live in 10*l.* houses, especially in the north, are working men.* There are still 50,000 freemen who are working men, notwithstanding the kind intentions of the noble Lord. When hon. Gentlemen are talking so constantly of the progress of the country, of its increased wealth, of its advance in all the arts that contribute to the enjoyment of life, with cheap provisions, with high wages, and with other innumerable advantages arising from increased commerce, they shut their eyes to what is the fact if they believe that the working classes have not proportionately advanced, and that a mechanic who twenty-five years ago could not live in a 10*l.* house does now, and very frequently, live in one.

Sir, no inconsiderable portion of the constituency is composed of the working classes. I calculate that

* The papers furnished by the late Ministry to Parliament in the Session of 1866, have entirely proved the accuracy of this statement, denied at the time.

if you take our existing constituency at 900,000, certainly, even now, more than a ninth consists of working men. But, Sir, the proposition that we make, and which, if we go into Committee, may, I have no doubt, be developed with great advantage, would add very much to that proportion; because by this Bill we propose that the 40*s.* freeholder shall, according to the old custom of England, again be found in a borough. We propose that the possessor of money in the savings' banks shall be a voter—a qualification that has been sneered at, but which I believe would at once bring 50,000 or 60,000 persons into the constituency, and which, by some modification, might be made still more efficacious. We propose to open all these avenues to the constituents, and I believe that the result would be that the working classes would find their entrance into the constituent body greatly facilitated.

Sir, I will not touch upon the third objection to the Bill at any length, for it appears to be one of the most trivial description. I allude to the alarm expressed by the noble Lord and others, that if our propositions were entertained, electoral districts must be the inevitable consequence. When I am told that a difference between 10*l.* and 20*l.* is our only security against electoral districts I confess I feel some alarm. I had an idea that the traditionary feelings of the English people, their love of ancient landmarks, and that strong spell of local association that so greatly influences them, would attach them so much to their counties and their boroughs that they would certainly never be induced to agree to an equal division of the soil for any electoral purposes. But, admitting all the arguments that have been urged upon that topic, they appear to me to be equally applicable to the existing system. If

a large county with two Members, because you have a uniformity of franchise, is to complain of a borough with a much less population being equally represented, would not the same objection apply as between a small and large county, or a small and large borough? The whole of the arguments might be urged against the existing system, but they may be encountered by reasons which on other occasions I have offered to this House, and which I will not now, therefore, intrude upon them, though perfectly irresistible in their application.

Sir, in thus noticing the two aims of the Resolution of the noble Lord, I have incidentally offered remarks which really touched at the same time on the principal features of the Bill. I have shown to the House that that measure is founded upon three great principles, none of which, let me remind the House, have been impugned in this debate, but of all of which I believe a majority of this House approves. I believe a majority of this House approves of a large extension of the constituent body. I believe a majority of this House approves of calling into direct representation those communities that have grown into importance since the Reform Act was passed. I believe that a large majority of this House is against any great redistribution of seats or disfranchising extensively the small constituencies; and these are the main principles of this measure. Sir, I have told you also that although, if all the principles of this measure are approved of by this House, the necessary consequence of that approbation should be that the Bill should be read a second time, we are diverted from that issue by an Amendment of the noble Lord, which touches only two parts, and those of detail. I have shown the House that had we been in favour of a

20*l.* franchise for counties, it was utterly impracticable to propose it. I have shown the House the reasons for the policy of adopting a 10*l.* qualification for counties, and that it was the best security for preventing that reduction of the borough franchise, which cannot, in our opinion, be dealt with slightly and gingerly, and which if you enter upon again, you will be forced, not only to adopt the municipal suffrage, as the right hon. Gentleman the Member for Carlisle proposes, but at once to go down to household suffrage, and introduce democratic elements, the consequences of which I have slightly traced. And I have shown the House finally that under these circumstances we have proposed the construction of a constituent body which would have been numerous and at the same time elastic, and so formed as to have afforded an opening to all worthy of the suffrage. Now, Sir, how have we been met? What is the argument of the noble Lord the leader of the Opposition (Viscount Palmerston) on the subject? The noble Lord approves of the principle of this measure. He has announced that he is in favour of the second reading, but at the same time that he will vote for the Resolution, which we have declared is fatal to the Bill. I must say that I was astonished at the mode in which the noble Lord addressed us. I must express my surprise at the manner in which the Opposition has been conducted. I remember when party spirit in this House ran very high—which fortunately is not the case now—I remember when parties were nearly equally balanced, when the struggle for power was very hot, and when the excitement of the public mind out of doors from 1837 to 1841 was such as all must deplore. Between those dates no less than three votes of want of confidence in the Ministry were moved in this House,

but I never heard of a contingent vote of want of confidence being brought forward. That was left to the present discussion, and to a near relative of a Member of the late Cabinet (Mr. O. Stanley). And I never heard in this House the leader of the Opposition, and one who has been in those high posts of confidence which the noble Lord has enjoyed, actually tell his opponents that if they counselled their Sovereign to exercise Her prerogative he would stop the supplies. This is so different from what one might have expected from the genial nature of the noble Lord, that, coupled with the announcement of the withdrawal of the vote of want of confidence, I must really treat the whole affair as a jest.

Sir, I must now say one word in reference to the noble proposer of this Amendment. We have heard a great deal about motives, and, Sir, I thought very unnecessarily, for motives are not imputed in Parliament; and if anybody supposes that they are, it must be some new Member not sufficiently experienced in our manners. But I was astonished that it should for a moment have been supposed that a Gentleman like the Solicitor-General (Sir Hugh Cairns) should make use of expressions imputing unworthy motives to any one, least of all to the noble Lord. I am sure that it is quite impossible for any Gentleman upon second thoughts to suppose that he could have so intended; and the Solicitor-General has this evening expressed what he did mean so clearly, and the noble Lord has received what he said so gracefully, that it is unnecessary to dwell longer upon that. I have no wish, no intention—from the bottom of my heart I say it—to impute any motives to the noble Lord unworthy his character or his position. The noble Lord may remember that when, in 1854, at

a moment of great personal distress, he withdrew, not without emotion, his Reform Bill, and some reproaches and some jeers were not spared him from his own side, I offered to him the unaffected tribute of the personal respect of the Gentlemen who then sat opposite to him. I do not think that there is a man who has sat long in this House but must honour the character of the noble Lord. I admire that character. I admire his great Parliamentary talents. I admire his ambition. Sir, it is not wise in this House to scrutinise with too much severity every act and every word of those who are entrusted with the conduct of parties in this House. In the fierce struggle of public life, and in the intense competition of this scene, one on whom devolves the lead of a party is called on for such constant action and such prompt decision that he must indeed be a wise and favoured being who can look back to everything that he has done without regret, and who may not have used words over which memory may mourn. But I am persuaded that neither the noble Lord nor any of his friends would desire that in this House there should be any diminution of that free and frank criticism upon the conduct of public men which has always been a part, and not the least valuable part, of our Parliamentary life and manners. Therefore, I am sure that the noble Lord will not feel offended with me if I tell him that I think there is one quality in his character which has rather marred than made his fortunes. It is a restlessness which will not brook that delay and that patience needed in our constitutional government for the conduct of public affairs. The moment that the noble Lord is not in power, he appears to me to live in an atmosphere of coalitions, combinations, coups-d'état, and cunning Resolutions. An Appropriation

Clause may happen to every man once in his life. But there is only one man living of whom it can be said that in 1835 he overthrew the Government of Sir Robert Peel upon an impracticable pretext; that in 1852 he overthrew the Government of Lord Derby with an objectless coalition; that in 1855 he overthrew the Government of Lord Aberdeen by a personal coup-d'état; and that in 1857 he overthrew the Government of the noble Lord the Member for Tiverton by a Parliamentary manœuvre. Now, Sir, I beg the noble Lord at this moment to throw the vision of his memory for an instant back to the year 1852. He sat before me then, the head of a mighty host. He drew the fatal arrow that was to destroy our Government. He succeeded. He destroyed in breathless haste the Government of Lord Derby; but did he destroy nothing else? Did he not destroy also the position of a great statesman? Did he not destroy almost the great historic party of which he was once the proud and honoured chief? The noble Lord does not sit opposite me now; but had he not hurried the catastrophe of 1852, and had he 'bided his time, according to the periodic habit of our constitution, he would have returned to these benches the head of that great party of which he was once the chief and proudest ornament. What has the noble Lord done now; and what is the moment that he has chosen for this party attack—an attack which was not necessary to the vindication of his policy, or for the assertion of those principles which I believe he sincerely holds? I brought forward on the part of the Government a measure, founded on approved principles, for which fair play and custom would have insured a second reading. The discussion on the questions which the noble Lord has thrust, as it

were, into the Speaker's hand would, in the due course of Parliamentary routine, have been postponed yet for some time. But what is the moment which the noble Lord has chosen to precipitate this struggle? A moment the most critical in the affairs of this country and of Europe for many years past. The noble Lord well knows that some weeks ago I came down to the table of this House, and informed the House that important negotiations were going on. The noble Lord has other means of information besides those supplied to this House. The noble Lord, I doubt not, is well informed of the present state of public affairs, and he could not have been unmindful of them in the introductory address to his Resolution, although that Resolution related only to a domestic subject, for the noble Lord could even that night think fit to cast a sneer at the individual to whom is entrusted at this moment the most awful responsibility that ever fell to the lot of a Minister. At a moment when it was of vital importance that the authority of the Government should not be interfered with or embarrassed—at a moment, too, of all others, and of all men, when the Minister for Foreign Affairs should not be held up to public distrust—the noble Lord chooses that moment for a party attack and for a personal sneer. I should not be acting with frankness and fairness to the House if I concealed the fact that the conduct of the noble Lord has been most embarrassing to the Government. I declare it on my responsibility as a Minister that the conduct of the noble Lord has produced injurious effects on the public service. But, Sir, I have such confidence in the integrity of our allies—I have such confidence in the energy and resources of that colleague against whom the noble Lord directed this

sneer—I have such confidence, above all, in the patriotism of the House of Commons, that I believe the division of to-night will confound the calculations and the combinations of the noble Lord, and will assist, and perhaps insure, the peace of Europe. The noble Lord—who, on these occasions, is always in the habit of introducing the question of dissolution—told me the other night that he was ready for the hustings, and that he should brandish upon them the Bill that I had introduced. In the office over which it is my honour to preside I have often an opportunity of meeting some of the principal constituents of the noble Lord—great merchants and eminent bankers of this metropolis; men of different opinions, agreeing in nothing else but in their readiness at all times to assist the Administration of this country. I am indebted as much as my predecessors undoubtedly were to their wise counsel and their zealous aid; but I can tell the noble Lord that, when they come to my office, it is not Parliamentary Reform that they speak about, it is not financial interests that most concern them, but what they say is, 'Peace!—let the Government give us peace; it is the only thing that we require. Our energies are depressed, our commerce circumscribed, and our enterprise crippled; but let the Government secure for us peace, and then they will be entitled to the gratitude and confidence of their country.' I thought, Sir, we had secured peace—I thought the time had arrived when I might have come down to this House and tell them that the dark disquietude that for three months has overshadowed Europe had passed away—had been succeeded by serenity and repose. But for this untoward, this unhappy Motion of the noble Lord that might have been. And I tell

the noble Lord that when he goes to the hustings, of which he talks, and brandishes this Bill, he will find the minds of his constituents full of another matter, and that they will demand from him the reasons for the course he has adopted.

Sir, it is something more than a year ago that Her Majesty summoned Lord Derby to Her councils. Lord Derby then, as on all other occasions, expressed to Her Majesty his readiness, as a last resource, to serve his Sovereign; but he also felt it his duty then to explain to the Queen that his position in the House of Commons had been much weakened by the last general election, and that he could not count in the following of his friends on more, probably, than one-third of the Members of this House; and, Sir, under these circumstances, Lord Derby humbly submitted to Her Majesty his wish that Her Majesty would reconsider her intention, and deign to pause before Her Majesty commanded him to undertake so difficult a task. The Queen was graciously pleased to act on that suggestion, and Her Majesty did reconsider her intention. Her Majesty surveyed the condition of her kingdom and of her empire with that comprehensive and perfectly impartial spirit which all who have served Her Majesty know that she ever exercises. And it was under these circumstances, having reconsidered the position of public affairs, that Her Majesty deigned to signify to Lord Derby that she deemed it was his duty to undertake the responsibility of their management.

Sir, we have endeavoured, in pursuance of the command of our Sovereign, to administer the affairs of this mighty empire. That we have done so sedulously I presume to say; that we have conducted them not altogether without success I venture to

believe. I know, Sir, that when we acceded to office there was a great fear in the public mind that this country was not defended as became England; but we now know, Sir, that the name of England carries due authority abroad, and that she can add to negotiation all that influence that results from the consciousness of power. I know that when we acceded to office there was great distress and depression in men's minds—a fear of increased taxation impending, and disappointment from the suspicion that engagements for the reduction of taxation would not be fulfilled. But, Sir, the burdens on the public have not been increased, and the promises of reduction have been realised; and the state of our revenue is, in every sense, highly satisfactory.

With regard to the more important branch of foreign affairs, I can say truly that although in that respect we had an inheritance of trouble, and probably during the period of our official existence we have had as many difficulties to deal with as could well fall to the lot of any Ministry, although during the last three months the question of peace or war has sometimes appeared to tremble in the balance, and to be only a matter of a moment, still we have so managed affairs that all immediate dangers appear to have vanished. There is now a prospect of arrangement, which, if concluded, will lead to the establishment of undoubted and enduring peace.

I touch, Sir, on principal topics; doubtless there are others, and of importance, but I will not dilate on them now. We have, I think, introduced measures calculated to make law reform not merely a mockery and a by-word. If we are indebted for the pacification of India to the wisdom of our rulers and the valour of our chiefs, at

least it must be acknowledged that this Administration did support and promote the success and heroism of those men by sending out to them, under great stress and difficulties, those supplies of valiant soldiers and those munitions that led to the triumphs they achieved. The noble Lord has talked, as he always talks, of a dissolution of the present Parliament. These are words that cannot escape my lips, and I must, with the permission of the House, refrain from touching upon that theme; but I may be allowed to say, in answer to the noble Lord, that if, in the course of time, the present servants of the Queen find themselves upon the hustings before their constituents, I for one have that confidence in a great and generous nation that I believe that in that eventful hour they will not forget the difficulties under which we undertook the administration of affairs; nor perhaps, Sir, be altogether unmindful of what, under those difficulties, we have accomplished for their welfare. It is the conviction we entertain of the justice of the people of England—it is because we believe in the power of public opinion, that we have been sustained in this House during our long and anxious struggle, and are still sustained, even at this moment, amid all the manœuvres of Parliamentary intrigue, and all the machinations of party warfare.

JUNE 7, 1859.

From a Speech on the Marquis of Hartington's Amendment to the Address.

MR. HANBURY seconded the Motion, being one of want of confidence in Her Majesty's Government.*

THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER: So much then, Sir, for the third ground on which this vote of want of confidence is based. There is still one other, on which the noble Lord and his friends rest the vindication of the line which they are now taking, and that is the failure of our late measure for the Amendment of the Representation of the People, and the conclusion consequent on that failure of our insufficiency to deal with the question of Parliamentary Reform. Well, now, let us consider this point. It is unnecessary on this occasion to vindicate the measure which we brought forward in the last Parliament, but I will state one fact, not upon my own authority, but on that of men of high scientific character, not connected with politics or with parties, whose only object in their researches is to establish and promulgate truth, and that is that our measure would have increased the constituent body by not less than 500,000,

* After the adverse vote of March 31, on the second reading of the Ministerial Reform Bill, Lord Derby had appealed to the country. It was on the reassembling of Parliament that the above vote of want of confidence was moved.

being absolutely a larger addition than was made by the Reform Bill of 1832. There were great objections to details, but still details no doubt of importance, urged against that measure. It was said, for instance, that it would disfranchise county freeholders living in towns, that it would enable votes to be given by papers, and other objections were made to it. Admitting, for the sake of argument, that these propositions perfectly deserved the condemnation they received, have no propositions to amend the representation of the people been coupled and connected with propositions which were equally unsuccessful and equally condemned? Why don't we hear of them? Why are we always told of our unhappy proposal to disfranchise freeholders and to give votes by papers? The noble Lord the Member for the City has been in office almost all his life; he has had a monopoly of this question of Reform; he has been handling it and fumbling it as long as I can remember. What, then, has he done? He has twice brought forward Reform Bills, and twice unsuccessfully. He proposed at one time—he, the great patron of the working classes—to disfranchise all the freemen in England. Why should not that proposition be urged as a reason for no longer entrusting him with the preparation of a Reform Bill? In one Bill he introduced a proposition hostile to the very principle on which representative Government is founded, and alien to the spirit of the constitution—representation by minorities. If there ever was a proposition received with universal condemnation, that was it. Why should not that disqualify the noble Lord from meddling again with the sacred question of Reform? The noble Lord, who cannot for a moment tolerate Government by a minority, within my memory sat on these benches, and led this

House as Prime Minister, in an avowed minority, resting entirely on the counsel and the support which he received from Sir R. Peel.* The noble Lord, who is so constant in his denunciations of Government by a minority, himself proposed to change the English constitution, and give representation to minorities at the hustings. I suppose he is the only person who can be entrusted with the preparation of a Reform Bill, because the other noble Lord, the Member for Tiverton, does not like the subject at all. It is one to which he does not conceal his disinclination. We, who, at least, have prepared and introduced a measure which would more than have doubled the constituency of the kingdom, are never to be allowed to give our opinions on a measure of this kind, while the noble Lord, who scarcely conceals his opinion that all Parliamentary Reform is a bad thing, and who tells you that if you are to have it you shall have as little as possible, is the popular candidate for the command of what we were told yesterday are now 'the united sections of the Liberal party.' I congratulate the hon. Member for Birmingham (Mr. Bright) on the lamb-like manner in which he abdicated those portentous opinions which a while ago frighted the island from its propriety.

* The ministry of Lord John Russell, formed in 1846, existed for six years in a House of Commons where there was a large Conservative majority. In moments of trial, it rested entirely on the support of Sir Robert Peel and his immediate followers.

MARCH 19, 1860.

On the Second Reading of the Reform Bill of the Ministry of Lord Palmerston.

Mr. DISRAELI: Sir, I understand that the promoters of this Bill claim for it the merit of simplicity. Simplicity in the operations of nature is admirable, because there we see adequate means adapted to the end proposed, without complexity; but in matters of legislation simplicity is a quality of an ambiguous character, because, if we find that the means are not adequate to the end, then it is not simplicity at which we arrive, but rather imperfection and incompleteness. Now, what is the end proposed by this Bill? The end is, 'to amend the representation of the people in England and Wales.' Are the means adequate to that end? My first impression, when I took up this Bill, was that it might have been drawn up four or five centuries ago. Except the land on which we tread, and masses of brick and mortar, I do not see any property referred to as a qualification for exercising the

* This measure, introduced into the House of Commons on the 1st of March by Lord John Russell, provided for the extension of the franchise in counties to 10*l.* occupiers and in boroughs to 6*l.* occupiers, without reference to rating.

The disfranchising clauses deprived of one representative those boroughs which, containing less than 7,000 inhabitants, returned two members to Parliament, while of the 25 seats thus vacated 15 were to be assigned to counties.

franchise, and that in a country where for more than a century the people have been doing nothing but creating and accumulating various properties to an incalculable amount. The claims of intelligence, of acquirement, and education are not noticed. The Bill, indeed, is of a mediæval character, but without any of the inspiration of the feudal system or any of the genius of the middle ages. It proposes to itself three principal objects, which I suppose I may consider three principles. It is to extend the suffrage in counties and in boroughs, and to effect some redistribution of Parliamentary seats. These certainly are objects well worthy the attention of the House, but there are objects almost as important connected with the exercise of the franchise, and with the better representation of the people of England and Wales, which, singular to say, are not alluded to in this Bill. It has been thought that, besides extending the possession of the franchise, it was one of our first duties to consider whether, by a more perfect registration, and by affording greater facilities for polling, the exercise of the suffrage might not be rendered far more valuable and far more advantageous to the community. I may remind the House that in the Bill which I had the honour to introduce to the notice of the late House of Commons there was a proposition, carried into effect by numerous clauses, to establish a self-acting registry. There was a scheme perfectly worked out, which would have so multiplied polling-places, that the Ministers of that day felt justified in asking the House to declare that the payment of travelling expenses to a voter should thereafter be illegal—a provision which would greatly have checked that corruption of which we all so much complain. But in this Bill to amend the representation of the people, so limited are its concep-

tion and the objects of which it treats, that I do not see any allusion to these primary and absolutely necessary topics. The general aspect of the Bill is highly unsatisfactory. Its omissions are its principal features. The qualifications from which it draws its franchises are of a limited character, and some important topics connected with the exercise of the suffrage are entirely omitted. That is the general aspect of the Bill; let us now consider it in some detail.

The Bill has three principles. It extends the franchise in counties and in boroughs, and it effects a redistribution of Parliamentary seats. I will first touch upon the arrangements which are proposed with reference to the borough franchise, and for this reason, that in the somewhat meagre statement with which Her Majesty's Ministers introduced this measure that was the only part of the Bill with regard to which they laid down any principle of action; and, therefore, there we have an opportunity of ascertaining to a certain degree the principle on which the Government has acted in that reconstruction of the constituency which is one of the principal objects of this measure. Now, Sir, when upon another occasion I laid down on the part of my colleagues the principle on which we had acted in reconstructing the constituency of this country, I ventured to observe that our sole object had been to confer the franchise upon those persons to whom we thought that high privilege might safely be entrusted, and who would, we believed, exercise it for the general welfare of the country, and, therefore, I said that in making the propositions which I then laid before the House we had not stopped to calculate what number of persons they would enfranchise. The point which we placed before us was the fitness of the recipients. We did not

embarrass ourselves with calculations or alarms as to the number who might receive the suffrage, so long as we were persuaded that those upon whom it was to be conferred would be classes who would accept it as a high privilege, and to whom it might safely be entrusted. That is not the principle upon which Her Majesty's Ministers have proceeded in framing this measure. On the contrary, the noble Lord, laying down the principle upon which he has acted, said that he had to consider what would be the number added to the constituency of the boroughs by the different methods which were under his consideration. He said, 'If I had taken a rating of 9*l.* I should only have got so many. If it had been 8*l.* it would have given me so many more, but I don't think enough, and I have, therefore, for boroughs fixed upon a particular figure, which will give some 257,000 votes. I think that is enough, and I do not think the House will be of opinion that it is too much.'

I object to that principle. In proposing to confer the franchise upon those who do not now possess it we ought to look to their fitness; we ought not to consider how we can obtain a certain number of additional votes, and then ask the House to support our measure because the number is one which may not alarm them. I say that, if instead of 257,000 there had been 557,000 men who, in the opinion of the House, were fit to receive the suffrage, the suffrage ought to have been given to them; and, at the same time, I assert that the fact that the number to be enfranchised is only half is no proof at all that the class proposed to be admitted to the franchise by this measure is one upon whom the suffrage ought to be conferred. I am not now giving any opinion on the policy of the proposition before us; but it appears to me that the founding a recommendation to

extend the franchise merely upon a consideration of numbers is an unsafe and shallow proceeding.

What is the addition which the noble Lord is about to make to the borough constituencies? Here are his figures. The present constituencies of the cities and boroughs of England and Wales may be placed at 440,000, including freemen, and the noble Lord makes a proposition by which they shall be increased to 658,000. Let us consider what is the character of the present constituencies, and then let us see what is the character of the addition which is to be made to them. There is no fallacy so great as to suppose that, because a man is registered and votes under a ten-pound household qualification, he therefore lives in a ten-pound house. Reflection and observation, especially after the debates of the last twelve months, have impressed that pretty generally upon the conviction of society. In the existing body of 410,000 housekeepers—I deduct the freemen—all classes almost in Her Majesty's dominions are included, from the patrician resident who, perhaps, pays a rent of 1,000*l.* a year for his dwelling, to the weaver and the dock-labourer of the Tower Hamlets who exercise the franchise under the lowest degree of qualification. But between Grosvenor Square and the Tower Hamlets, or rather between the classes which they represent, there is scarcely any class in England that is not included in the existing borough constituencies. All the mercantile class, all the professional class, all the various classes of retail dealers—classes of different political opinions, of different religious opinions, of different habits, of different social standing—at present exercise the franchise in cities and boroughs. To these 410,000 persons, whose feelings, whose position, whose opinions, whose habits are all so varying and so

contrary, the noble Lord, under this Bill, proposes to add 248,000, who are all from the same class, and whose opinions, feelings, and habits are identical.

Let us consider what will be the effect upon our present constituent body, with its various elements, of the introduction of a class so purely homogeneous. It may be said that raising the constituent body, considering the question only numerically, from 440,000 to 658,000 is not a very great experiment; that it is, as the noble Lord has told us, an increase of only one-third. But it appears to me that, if we accept that calculation, we shall embrace a fallacy which may greatly mislead us. What we have to consider is, what will be the probable effect of the proposed extension of the franchise upon the present borough constituencies. As it happens that the proposed new electors will produce what, generally speaking, may be described as no effect whatever upon the present metropolitan constituencies, and as, of course, they will produce no effect upon the constituencies of the Universities, we must deduct the amount of those constituencies from the existing constituent body before we can attempt to estimate what will be the effect of the new body upon the old one. If we deduct 145,000 electors, which is the amount of the metropolitan constituencies and the constituencies of the Universities, from the existing constituent body, we shall find that the number of the remaining voters is only 288,000; making a deduction of 20 per cent. from the addition which the noble Lord proposes, there will remain 203,000; and, therefore, we have to consider what will be the effect upon the present constituent body of 288,000 of a homogeneous class of 203,000 coming into competition with it at public elections. But even that mode of putting the question, which is

an accurate and a true one, will hardly convey a complete idea to the House of the manner in which the new electors must necessarily act upon our cities and boroughs; because, to ascertain what will be the effect of 203,000 voters, all of one class, bound together by the same sentiments and the same habits, upon 288,000 animated by different opinions, influenced by different feelings, and regulated by different habits, we must recollect that, as appears by the returns which the Government have placed before us, in six boroughs—and those among the most important in the country—the constituency is trebled, in 28 it is doubled, and in 48 the addition is equal to at least one-half of the present electoral body. It results, therefore, that about half of the boroughs of England and Wales will, so far as we can form any calculation, be under the influence of the new class of voters. I give no opinion at present upon the policy of the measure; my only object is to put before the House what is the real state of the facts, and what may be the probable results of the proposed extension of the franchise.

Let us now consider whether the particular class upon whom the noble Lord is about to confer this great political power are a class who are incapable, or who are unlikely to exercise it. Are they a class who have shown no inclination to combine? Are they a class incapable of organisation? Quite the reverse. If we look to the history of this country during the present century, we shall find that the aristocracy, or upper classes, have on several very startling occasions shown a great power of organisation. I think it cannot be denied that the working classes, especially since the peace of 1815, have shown a remarkable talent for organisation, and a power of discipline and combina-

tion inferior to none. The same, I believe, cannot be said of the middle classes. With the exception of the Anti-Corn-Law League, I cannot recall at this moment any great successful political organisation of the middle classes, and, living in an age when everything is known, we now know that that great confederation, which ultimately proved so triumphant, owed its success to a great and unforeseen calamity,* and was on the eve of dispersion and dissolution only a short time before that terrible event occurred. [*An ironical cheer from* Mr. Bright.] I can only say that my authority is one of the most eminent members of your own confederation. But the fortune of the League does not affect my argument, which is founded on the fact that the working classes have shown on various occasions, and for long continuous periods, powers of organisation, discipline, and combination quite equal to those of the upper classes; but that the middle classes, with the exception of the Anti-Corn-Law League, have not, in my memory, conducted any great political confederation to a successful issue. Then the class to which you are about to give this predominance is perfectly capable of organisation; and from the days of the Luddites to the present period the tradition of frequently secret, but always well-disciplined, organisation has been preserved among the working classes. It is said that the working classes are exceedingly intelligent and educated, and therefore likely to appreciate the possession of the franchise. But these are reasons why you should take care, in legislating on this subject, that you do not give them a predominance. What has been the object of our legislative labours for many years past but to put an

* The Irish famine.

end to a class legislation which was much complained of? But you are now proposing to establish a class legislation of a kind which may well be viewed with apprehension.

It is highly necessary, in dealing with this subject, and in attempting to confer the franchise on the working classes, that you should not establish by that means a class legislation with which, considering its power and probable consequences, no class legislation that has hitherto, though only partially, prevailed can for a moment be compared. It was obvious policy that, while you attempted to introduce the working classes to the exercise of the franchise, you should counteract the tendency to this class domination, by giving a variety of franchises, and by effecting a natural counterpoise to consequences which all must deprecate. This was attempted in the Bill brought forward last year, and how were the propositions contained in that measure met? They were called 'fancy franchises,' and that was considered an answer. Alliteration tickles the ear, and is a very popular form of language among savages. It is, I believe, the characteristic of rude and barbarous poetry; but it is not an argument in legislation. I thought it a remarkable circumstance, after hearing so much of the objection to 'fancy franchises,' that the present Bill was not a fortnight on the table of the House before I found distinguished Liberals rising in every quarter on the opposite benches and proposing the introduction of what they denounced last year as 'fancy franchises.' Let us see what you mean by 'fancy franchises.' We never had an opportunity of arguing the question last year, because the Bill was not allowed to go into Committee. I will take a 'fancy franchise'—a franchise dependent on the partial occupation

of a house, and which is popularly called the 'lodger franchise.' Hon. Gentlemen speak of the lodger franchise as if lodging were a casual circumstance in our social life; that it might be as well as not to give a lodger the franchise; that he was very likely to be a respectable man, but that, after all, it was not a matter of any great importance. Now, lodging is not an accident of our social life; it is a condition of our social life; The richer the country gets, and the greater its trade, the more numerous will become the lodger class. Just as the retail trade takes every year larger dimensions the shopkeeper must have a larger shop, either as a magazine for his stores, or as a means of exhibiting his goods. The larger the shop, the more disproportioned is the house to his social wants; and so, just as the country increases in wealth and trade, the shopkeeper will feel the necessity of filling his ample and commodious chambers; and in that way the lodger class comes into existence, with ample or sufficient means, and with all the habits that make men respectable in this country. They are educated, and feel a sense of responsibility in the performance of public duties. When you give a vote to the mere householders, surely those who really occupy the house, and are infinitely more wealthy, and frequently much better educated, ought not to be debarred from a trust of which they are worthy. What is the use of calling it a 'fancy franchise?' It is not a 'fancy franchise,' but a real franchise; as real as, and more likely to be worthily exercised than, the householders' franchise, which, according to a limited and barbarous notion, you consider the only proper franchise.

The payment of direct taxes might well be a basis of the suffrage. You are now in this country substituting,

in a great degree, direct taxation for indirect taxation. The careful and limited substitution of direct taxation for indirect, which has gone on now for some years, is a matter, no doubt, of the utmost importance, and highly advantageous to the country, but it is a system which, if pursued without great prudence and caution, would make the Finance Minister who proposed it the Necker of this country. It is a process connected with great consequences, and at a moment when you not only propose to confer the franchise but predominant power on a class that does not pay direct taxation, I hardly know any qualification which could be more properly recommended than a suffrage based on the payment of direct taxation. It will be answered, though momentous consequences may depend on a class enfranchised on this basis, it is a mere 'fancy franchise'—but it is unnecessary to pursue the subject further, because every one must feel what a silly and unmeaning phrase that is.

I have placed before the House some critical remarks with respect to the borough franchise. I think the noble Lord made a mistake in founding his proposition on a mere consideration of numbers. I think the noble Lord ought to have considered, in the first place, fitness, and not numbers. Following his principle, this appears to be the consequence, that the noble Lord is about to introduce a body homogeneous in character and interests of upwards of 200,000 into our boroughs, in addition to what is really not more, so far as the question of their influence is concerned, than a body of about 288,000. Then, in one-half of the boroughs in England the new constituency will be able to command the seats, and by so doing you are changing the depositary of political power to a very great extent, and are,

in fact, conferring power on a class—a result which your recent legislation, during the last ten years, has endeavoured in every way to avoid. I cannot, therefore, approve this mode of increasing the suffrage in boroughs. I do not think this proposition ought to have been brought forward, unless accompanied by means through which the elements of the constituency should be more various in character, and unless a counterpoise to the predominance of any particular class were established.

I know it may be said that the result of the last election was favourable to the introduction of the working classes into the constituency by the mode of reducing the franchise. It is difficult to say what was the result of the last general election. That is a matter of very considerable doubt; but there is no doubt that the noble Lord took a prudent course when he took a prompt one, and called for the opinion of Parliament at the moment of its meeting. What might have been the opinion of Parliament after sitting a few months longer I leave the House to judge. The opinion of the country on this question of admitting the working classes to the suffrage was given in no decided, but rather in a hesitating, manner; and I think the opinion of the country was this, that it was desirable that a certain portion of the working classes—those who by their skill and conduct had proved themselves worthy of the electoral privilege—should be admitted into the constituency under certain conditions, which would guard the community from the predominance of that class. That, I believe, was the real verdict of the country.

But it is a mistake to suppose that the working classes at this moment have no share in the representation. I must consider the freemen of England as a part of the working classes, though they are always

treated with such contempt by some hon. Gentlemen. Moreover, the result has shown that in the metropolis the great body of the working classes are in possession of the franchise; and that they also possess the franchise in many of the most important northern boroughs no one questions. I do not suppose that you can estimate the share of the working classes in the representation at less than one-ninth or one-eighth even of the existing constituencies. But when hon. Gentlemen lay it down as a principle that the working classes ought to enjoy the franchise, we must remember that working men are not confined to towns alone, and that there are others who also have a fair right to consideration. The superior class of rural labourers and of working men in the country, if you look at their knowledge of their pursuits, their general conduct, and the great skill which is required in their daily duties, need not shrink from a comparison with the workmen of the towns. If you are to recognise the claims of skilled mechanics, you must equally take into consideration the claims of English woodmen, English shepherds, English gardeners, and some of the higher class of labourers in husbandry. It is impossible to deal with the question in a general way, and, therefore, you necessarily have to make a selection of the working classes, in order that their voice and influence may be heard. It follows that you must have limitation, that you must have qualification; and I say that the only effect of the noble Lord's Bill will be to give a predominance, in half the boroughs of England, to a class who, if they act in conformity with their antecedents, will evince decision, combination, discipline, and will probably return to this House a body of men who will exercise a great and, perhaps, a controlling influence over the Government of the country.

Now, are you prepared to sanction such a course? Is it a course to be justified—I will not say on the principles of political expediency, but—on the principles of political justice? I contend that it is not, and therefore I cannot agree that the method by which the noble Lord proposes to admit the influence of the working classes in the election of Members of Parliament is a wise and well-considered one. I think he ought to have increased the borough constituencies by various means, and not merely by this perilous monotony of process; and while he might have introduced the most skilful mechanics among the working classes into the constituency, he might have done it under conditions which would not have neutralised the voice of all the various classes comprised in the present borough constituencies.

I proceed now to consider the next principle on which this Bill is founded—namely, the reduction of the county franchise. I, for one, have never opposed the creation in the counties of an ample constituency. Believing that the influence of the land is most beneficial for the preservation of our constitutional liberties, I have been always anxious that the great landed proprietors in this House should come here supported by the voice of a numerous constituency, and should be at the head not merely of their tenantry, but of their neighbours. I have always felt that that would add to their influence and power, which are of the utmost advantage to the State. But in increasing the county constituencies one condition should be observed. The persons thus enfranchised should be fairly connected with the chief property and the chief industry of the county. A constituency is not connected with the chief property and chief industry of a county if, for

example, the county suffrage is possessed by some town which may be a new community developing itself by means of some special interest of its own, or by some decaying borough without any sympathy with the property and pursuits of the county. I don't think also that the condition I have just laid down is observed when the inhabitants of a great borough teeming with a population which has overpassed the old Parliamentary limits affixed to the town in 1832, but connected with that borough by every tie and duty, social and political, are permitted to send out their hordes of electors, who ought to have votes for the borough of which they really form a part, to elect a county member having little sympathy with their local interests and feelings. I don't think that main condition is observed when at any time, but especially at a time when you are establishing the franchises of England more and more upon occupation, you allow freeholds in towns to become the great manufactories of split votes, by which, at a general election, bands of voters are enabled to pour forth, and elect Members of Parliament for a district with which they have no local sympathy and no common interests.

In the Bill I do not find any means adopted by which that great injustice can be rectified. The noble Lord, though his measure is a small one, can, however, condescend to details where the county suffrage is concerned. For example, I find that Clause 4 will effect disfranchisement on a large scale, by enacting that the occupation of a building jointly with land is not to confer a right of voting, unless the building be of 5*l.* annual value. That clause is a new one, and would disfranchise a large number of voters in the rural districts. The noble Lord has a terror of

disfranchisement, which with adroit misrepresentation he opposed in the Bill submitted last year, while proposing it in every measure of his own; but when simplicity is the order of the day, the noble Lord, though he will not establish a just franchise in the counties, adopts a sweeping measure of disfranchisement, applying only to rural voters.

The county franchise, as proposed in the Bill, will greatly reduce the influence of the landed proprietors and of the landed interest in this country. I object to any such reduction, and I will tell the hon. Member, who seems alarmed or annoyed by that expression, why it is I so object. I look round upon Europe at the present moment, and I see no country of any importance in which political liberty can be said to exist. I attribute the creation and the maintenance of our liberties to the influence of the land and to our tenure of land. In England there are large properties round which men can rally, and that, in my mind, forms the only security in an old European country against that centralised form of government which has prevailed and must prevail in every European community where there is no such counterpoise. It is our tenure of land to which we are indebted for our public liberties, because it is the tenure of land which makes local government a fact in England, and which allows the great body of Englishmen to be ruled by traditionary influence and by habit, instead of being governed, as in other countries, by mere police. Well, Sir, believing that the proposed reconstruction of the county franchise has a tendency to diminish the just and salutary influence of the land of this country, I highly object to the noble Lord's plan.

Now, the third principle upon which this measure is founded is the redistribution of Parliamentary seats.

Let us see whether the application of that principle be a just and wise one. There are two schools of opinion upon this subject. There is the school of politicians who would entirely reconstruct the borough system of England, and who would not only entirely reconstruct it, but I may say would entirely subvert it. They are of opinion that what should be obtained by public Parliamentary election in this country is a declaration of the opinion of the mere numerical majority of the population in the country, and they would subvert the present system and reconstruct it on a scale which would obtain that result. That is what I call the American system, and it works sufficiently well in the United States. The population of the United States greatly exceeds that of any other American community; it is rapidly increasing, and is sustained by the resources of an illimitable territory; therefore, when their Legislative Assembly, or Parliament, is elected on the principle of numerical majority, they have a first-rate assembly founded on that principle. But that would not apply to England. If we take a mere numerical majority as the test of our representative system, we are very inferior to many countries in our population; and if we had a representative assembly elected on that principle, all we should have would be a third-rate assembly.

The other school of politicians is of opinion that population of course is an element in representation. Nobody would be so absurd as to deny that. It is an element just the same as property is; but in a very ancient country, highly civilised, with a complicated social organisation, they hold we are bound to represent all the interests of that country, and they are essentially local. If you have a representative assembly elected on this principle, you will, inasmuch as you have in

England the most powerful social organisation in the world, have a first-rate representative body; that is to say, a House of Commons. These are the two schools. No one pretends that our borough system was invented to obtain these results, but it is a system which in this country secures that description of representation, and it is cherished and preserved because an ancient machinery has been found existing which produces a desirable end.

I can quite understand the scheme of the hon. Member for Birmingham and his friends which so startled the country a year ago, because they act consistently on the American principle. But those who act on the English principle must be ruled by different considerations, and must propose different ends. All they conclude in the redistribution of seats is this: When they find in the periodical revision of the representation of the country that new and powerful interests have arisen not duly represented, then following the example of their predecessors—not merely Parliamentary precedents, but the precedents of our Sovereigns in the exercise of their prerogative—they confer upon these new interests a political representation; and, inasmuch as it is the custom of this country, now long settled, that the number of this Assembly is not to be increased, they hold that the mildest course which they can take is to deprive existing boroughs in some degree of their representation; and, therefore, it was a sound principle which the late Government adopted last year for meeting these wants, when they proposed that some of the least important boroughs of the country should contribute their fair share of the means by which that result should be obtained. So far as he has followed that example I approve of the course which the noble Lord has taken; but the noble Lord has carried the

point too far, or not far enough. If he is of the opinion of those who think that the borough system is indefensible, he should have proposed a great change; but if his principle is the English principle, and he believes that there are no abstract grounds on which you can even partially disfranchise a borough which enjoys the privilege of returning Members to this House, then I think that the noble Lord has gone too far. The noble Lord ought to have made enfranchisement precede disfranchisement. There are a few boroughs in the north of England whose claims to representation cannot be denied. But it is not consistent with the spirit of our constitution to enfranchise boroughs in the north of England without enfranchising others in the south, because we should study the distribution of power throughout the whole country. There are one or two counties where the representation is inadequate; for they contain vast interests of a different and contrary character. There is a district in the West Riding, extending over seventy miles, whose interests—agricultural—are different from those of another portion of the same county, where manufacturing industry is teeming, and it is advisable, therefore, that the interests which are not adequately represented should be called into this House. The noble Lord, however, goes past that.

I object to his system on two grounds. First of all, I think he is acting on a complete fallacy in establishing what I venture to call cumulative Members for places already represented. Now, I want to know from the Government on what principle they have so acted. You do not act on that principle in the electoral body. If a man has 100,000*l.* a year he has only one vote, and on very good grounds, for you know that although the man has a large fortune, and you give him the same

vote as the humblest dweller in a 10*l.* tenement, he has an indirect influence in the community which asserts itself and sufficiently protects his property. Why should you do that for Manchester and Birmingham which you do not do for the wealthy individual? Hon. Gentlemen are sent here to represent the opinion of places, and not the power of places. Does anybody suppose that if the interests of Manchester were assailed they would only be defended by the two respectable Representatives who sit in this House for that borough? Not at all. We know that there would be scores and scores of Members, not confined to one side of the House, who would support the interests of Manchester; and, therefore, I entirely disapprove of this principle, which appears to be perfectly unconstitutional, and which would change the character of this House, because, if representation is to be meted out according to population and property, you would soon have very few places indeed represented in this House, and representation would be confined entirely to large manufacturing and commercial cities and large counties.

I admit that in the Reform Bill of 1832 you did confer on some counties a third Member. But the circumstances under which that was done could not be drawn into a precedent, and if it were one, as I shall perhaps be told it was, it would be a very bad one. In the Reform Bill of 1832 it was necessary to increase the county Members. There were some counties in which you exceeded the number of voters which authorised the conferring of two Members, and yet which did not reach that number which permitted division, and this plan of having a third Member was consequently had recourse to. But some of those counties we now know have reached an amount of population which authorises

division, and it would be better, if you wish to increase the county representation, to divide those counties than to have recourse to this system of cumulative members, which cannot be defended, and which is entirely opposed to the spirit of the constitution.

But there is another ground on which I think it is equally objectionable. It would appear to be the happy practice of the constitution that almost every class, and every interest, and every great institution is represented, and though under our constitution in that sense the minority may be represented, still when a constituent body is formed the majority ought to decide, and the minority in that sense ought to have no claim. It is the custom of the country, and that is a very strong reason; but beyond that the principle is based upon all our constitutional precedents and practice, and it would appear to be a principle which can also be upheld on sound political reasons, even abstractedly. The noble Lord in 1854 proposed that the minority should be directly represented in this House. In my opinion a more unconstitutional course could not have been suggested, for there is only one proper way by which the minority of a constituent body should be represented, and that is by becoming a majority. The noble Lord has now proposed, not directly, but indirectly, to secure a representation to the minority in several places in some cities and some counties. I entirely object to that; but it is done, although indirectly, in this Bill, and there are some counties and some towns to which a third Member is added on that principle. We have complained of late years of a want of distinct parties and of distinct principles in this House. So far as I can learn, that is a want which will in a very short time

disappear. I think we shall soon have distinct parties and distinct principles on both sides; but if anything could be devised, which would introduce into this House a timid and temporising spirit, it is the political and Parliamentary machinery that recognises the representation of the minority of a constituent body in Parliament. A want of conviction and a want of energy and spirit in public life would be the consequence, and therefore I entirely disagree with the second object which the noble Lord wishes to obtain by thus dealing with the redistribution of seats. It appears to me that the principle of the redistribution of seats, as the noble Lord applies it, is unsound. It can satisfy none of those opposed to the English element of Parliamentary life who want to reconstruct the House of Commons on the American principle, while at the same time it fatally alters the only sound principles upon which the disfranchisement of boroughs ought to be permitted—namely, that of conferring a representation on interests not already represented.

I have now touched on the three principles of this Bill. What is the course we ought to take with respect to it? That is the question. It is a very bad measure. That, I think, is the universal opinion. In fact, I believe I do not know more than two individuals whom it perfectly satisfies—namely, the noble Lord the Foreign Secretary and the Member for Birmingham; and the Member for Birmingham, with that candid audacity which in his case greatly neutralises the pernicious opinions he expresses and the dangerous course he pursues, has already told us that no sooner has this Bill passed than he shall agitate the country to obtain a much more extensive change. But if we reject this Bill on the second reading, we know what will be said.

It will be said by the noble Lord, 'You are against Parliamentary Reform, you are against extending the franchise, which, when you were in a responsible position, you yourselves brought in a Bill to effect.' I am not against extending the franchise. If we are to deal with the subject at all, I think the franchise might be extended, and safely extended, in a way, on the whole, beneficial to the country. My opinion is, so far as I can form an estimate from the documents in my possession, that under the Bill of 1859 the franchise would have been more extended than under this Bill; therefore I am not against extending the franchise. Nor, if it is necessary to consider the subject at all, am I against the redistribution of seats; that is to say, to call into Parliamentary representation interests not now sufficiently represented. I wish to see in counties and boroughs the constituencies increased, because I think they can be increased in a manner which would strengthen the constitution, and because I think the means and materials are in existence by which that result could be obtained, and by which the working classes might have an increased power of representing their opinions in this House; while, on the other hand, the due weight and influence—so important and so necessary to the liberties of the country—of the landed interest might be adequately represented. Therefore, so far as the alleged principles of this Bill are concerned, I consider I am not justified in saying, though I think the application of those principles is most objectionable, that we ought to reject the Bill on its second reading.

We shall have the opportunity of considering this Bill in Committee. What will you do in Committee? That will be deferred to a period which will allow all,

high or low, deeply to consider the responsibility which falls on those who meddle with questions of this importance. I do not feel called on now to intimate what may be done by myself or my friends in Committee after Easter. I am not at all sure whether I shall propose anything myself after Easter. I am not sure whether the responsibility of this measure may not, considering the circumstances under which it was introduced and projected, fairly rest with the noble Lord and Her Majesty's Government. Indeed, if I were to take a limited and Parliamentary view of the consequences of this Bill, it would not be for the Conservative party that I should feel very great alarm. I do not think the 100 boroughs of England that are to be delivered over to one class, whose interests and opinions and habits are identical—I do not think those 100 boroughs are represented, generally speaking, by Members of the Conservative party. But the loss by this House of a vast number of Members who now adorn it, and who give to it weight and responsibility and knowledge, though they do not sit on the same benches as myself, I should not the less regret as a national calamity. I should be very sorry to see the just influence and authority of the Whig party curtailed. I think it one of the best securities for public liberty and good government in this country, that, when a change takes place in the administration of this country, at least power is handed to a party, on whichsoever side of the House they sit, who are prepared to exercise that power on English and not on American principles. I think it is something, when such changes take place, that power should be handed to those who respect the traditions of the country, and who will be faithful to its prescriptive claims; therefore

I should deeply deplore this serious blow, so far as the Whig party is concerned, and from hands from which twenty years ago we should not have expected such a blow to come. I shall, therefore, not oppose the second reading of this Bill, but I shall be curious, when the House is in Committee, to see what propositions will be made to render it, even in the opinion of hon. Gentlemen opposite, who have already shown a great disposition to make Amendments, a Bill not injurious to the interests of the country.

It has been said of English statesmen that they are more remarkable for their active qualities than for their prescience, and I am not surprised at that. Man is rather an active than a contemplative creature, and it is the privilege of few to have the power of prediction. I think on the whole it is better for England that public opinion has been rather in advance of Parliament than that it should be the reverse. One result has been to make this Assembly a practical one, and though we may have occasionally blundered, it is better to blunder by adhering to an old-established system than to blunder by adopting a new system that has never been tried. I admit that with reference to this question of Parliamentary Reform English statesmen have been much to blame. There is no doubt that from the period when the Duke of Wellington was at the head of affairs, and for two or three years previously, warnings were given to our leading public men, which were unhappily disregarded, and opportunities in consequence lost which, if they had been turned to account, might have been productive of great advantage. No doubt when the noble Lord reopened this question he was influenced by a sincere and, as he thought, a sound feeling, and was anxious to

avoid the error of the Duke of Wellington. The House knows its history from that time. The noble Lord has more or less been in power for these ten years. He has kept this question in hand, so that when we were in power it had become a weapon always ready to be drawn from the armoury of politics, and brandished against a Conservative Ministry. The time had then come, in our opinion, when the question might have been terminated, and we endeavoured to terminate it on conditions which, I think, are spoken of now by the country in a more kindly manner than when they were first introduced, and which, if they had been accomplished, would, as I think, have strengthened the constitution. But, Sir, I believe the noble Lord was premature in the measure which he introduced ten years ago, and that those who have followed him are equally in a certain degree to blame. Our course was in self-defence, and because it was impossible to carry on the Government, from the manner in which that measure was left, if we were not prepared to deal with it. Sir, I do not wish to escape from my share of blame.

But, then, it may be said, in excuse of the noble Lord and of his successors, that the time was opportune, if changes were ultimately to be carried, to anticipate political necessity. The country was at ease, it was prosperous; there was a prospect of foreign tranquillity as well as of domestic contentment. What is your condition now? Is it the same? Is the state of affairs the same as when the noble Lord and his successors endeavoured to deal with this question? A great military nation, of matchless valour, with a public organisation more complete than any that has existed since the days of ancient Rome, abounding in resources

of men, money, and military materiel, and so enamoured of glory that it has freely bartered freedom for fame, no longer conceals its thirst of general empire. So far as Europe is concerned, the prospect is much more dangerous than in the days of the Great Monarch; for in the days of Louis XIV. Europe was full of military energy; Europe now is prostrate and spiritless. So far as England is concerned, the prospect is infinitely more dangerous than in the days of the French Republic and the old French Empire; for France was then our implacable foe; France is now our unswerving friend. France then menaced our hearths; France now decorates our citizens. France harassed our trade then by a continental blockade; France now facilitates commercial intercourse by treaties of amity. There is nothing to keep the English people watchful or awake. Superior to rapine, hardly condescending to force, France is building up a colossal despotism by all the arts of the most advanced Liberalism—by universal suffrage—by secret voting—by electoral districts. Will you never be warned? Is this the time and the condition of affairs when you should attempt feebly, but in the same vein, to imitate these political schemes? Is this the time when you should still further deviate from that old, that free, and that aristocratic constitution which has formed the Empire of England and framed the liberties of Englishmen?

Sir, I must say that is not my opinion. The noble Lord the Secretary of State, since the night when he entered into the fatal pledge on this side of the House which has placed his Government in consequence in a position of great embarrassment, has been called upon to preside over an office of the State very diffe-

rent from that which he then contemplated. The noble Lord is in receipt every day of information which may well make him look grave, and the perusal of which cannot but teach him that it is a great thing for a Minister that he can fall back upon the ancient institutions of a country which have proved their power to stem any storm. Well, Sir, that being the case, I will not relinquish the hope that, before we are summoned to go into Committee, a relieved House of Commons and a grateful people will learn from the noble Lord that this unnecessary, this uncalled-for, and this mischievous measure has been withdrawn.

JUNE 4, 1860.

On going into Committee on the Reform Bill.

LORD JOHN RUSSELL declared the intention of the Government to withdraw the Scotch and Irish Reform Bills.

Mr. DISRAELI: Sir, I am not surprised that the noble Lord should have seized this occasion, after the preliminary discussion we have had, to take a general review of those discussions, and to attempt to meet some of the objections that have been raised. In the few remarks that I shall make, I hope I shall do so in the same candid spirit as that in which the noble Lord has addressed the House. It appears to me that the noble Lord has occupied half the time devoted to his observations to giving reasons why the Conservative party should have consented to the second reading of his Bill, and then to complaining of the Conservative party for having allowed the second reading to pass. The noble Lord has stated accurately enough—and, if not with perfect accuracy, in no spirit of unfairness, I am confident, but perhaps from his being misled by the interval that has elapsed since the casual observations I made respecting the franchise and the working classes—he has stated to the House that, so long ago as 1852, I, being then the chief Minister of the Crown in this House, expressed my opinion that if a measure of Reform were again brought forward—the noble Lord having recently failed in one of his attempts—that it was much

to be regretted that both in the measure of 1832, and in subsequent measures of the noble Lord's, the fair claims of the working classes had not been considered. That is not an opinion that I expressed in 1852 only, or which the great body of Gentlemen on this side of the House professed on that occasion solely. That has always been our opinion, and I think in 1859, although there may be a difference respecting the mode and means by which we endeavoured to carry that view into effect, there is no one doubts the sincerity of our attempt to give in some degree a direct representation to the working classes by the measure we then proposed.

The noble Lord also states that, after the last general election, I, on the part of the Conservative Government and my political friends generally, recognised that the verdict of the country must be taken as one in favour of some reduction of the franchise in boroughs. I am not aware that any one on this side of the House wishes to shrink from that opinion. But the inference that the noble Lord has drawn from these circumstances appears to me to be rather inconsequential. It may or it may not be a necessary deduction from all that has passed that we should vote for the second reading of this Bill for the representation of the people; but it is not one of the necessary consequences of those opinions, or of those pledges, that we should approve of the policy of the noble Lord in this matter, or of the mode in which he has attempted to carry that policy into effect. Assenting to the general principle of the measure, we did not oppose the second reading; but when the noble Lord says all the rest is matter of detail, he has quite forgotten that he came forward on the earliest occasion when he introduced this measure in a spirit very different from that by

which any Minister had before been animated with reference to this question, and pursued a line of reasoning very different from that which had been adopted on any previous occasion. The noble Lord came forward and introduced a Bill for the amendment of the representation of the people of this House, and recommended it for adoption as being founded on the principle of numbers. Having laid down that principle, he very properly said—'Documents shall be placed in your hands from which you will be able to collect an opinion as to the *data* on which the policy of the Government is founded, and sanctioned, and recommended.' The noble Lord cannot pretend that the accuracy of these estimates has not been gravely impugned; he cannot pretend that the objections to their accuracy are not of a weighty description. He cannot forget that, in 'another place,' the question has been considered so important as that the labours of an eminent Committee have been unceasingly given in order to arrive at the truth upon this subject; and if we are to believe general rumour, the result of their investigation is in accordance with that generally and widely circulated opinion which the people of this country generally entertain upon the subject.

But while the policy of the noble Lord depended on these facts—the policy of the noble Lord being that of entrusting political power to a certain number, and being the first Statesman who ever came forward in this House and said we ought to lay down such a rule, the statements of the noble Lord being not only suspected, but impugned—he cannot be surprised that Gentlemen on both sides of the House, although willing to consider the question of the Amendment of the representation of the people—though

they may be ready and desirous to a certain extent that all classes in the country should be directly represented in this House—still, at the same time, should recoil with apprehension from a measure which is, perhaps, founded upon grave inaccuracies, and upon statements which, if incorrect and acted upon, may entail upon the country the gravest consequences.

So far with reference to the general observations of the noble Lord with respect to the opinions of those who sit on this side of the House, and on the apparent inconsistency in their conduct. I think the noble Lord failed in that—failed in succeeding to establish any inconsistency. We accept and adopt that which we have always professed; we are not the enemies of the working classes. I think we have shown that often, and I think the general policy of the Tory party, as it is termed, has been one not unfavourable to the interests of the working classes. But feeling that the political franchise is not to be considered as the privilege of a class, but as one to be exercised for the benefit of the country, we have to consider, when a class is brought forward as claiming the franchise, not merely whether they shall enjoy the personal privilege, but whether that privilege shall be enjoyed to such a degree that it shall give that class a preponderating power contrary to the general interests. Therefore, so far as the observations with which the noble Lord prefaced his remarks are concerned, I do not think he succeeded in establishing any fair cause of complaint against Gentlemen sitting on this side on account of their Parliamentary conduct in this respect. If it be a matter of complaint by the noble Lord that the most important measure a statesman can bring forward in this country—one which affects the depository of power—has been severely

and, perhaps, completely examined, I am sure the noble Lord must feel that there have been on his own measure, and on his own side, critics as keen, as able, as eloquent, and as assiduous as any on this opposite bench. I could understand the tone of the noble Lord if he were about to fulfil the important programme with which he commenced the Session. I could understand the noble Lord if, remembering the late period of the Session, and the objections to proceeding with the measure at the present moment, the noble Lord were to say, 'Gentlemen may urge these as exceptions to my conduct, and argue that the time and season are no longer fair and opportune; but I, on the part of my colleagues, give my assent to the great policy we have recommended. All your objections are of a trifling character in comparison with our convictions of the importance of our policy; and whatever may be the convenience or inconvenience to the House, or the menacing features of the times, we still believe that this is a policy of a vital character, that ought to be pursued and carried, and, whether or not the Parliamentary Session be continued without prorogation for six months longer, carry it we will.' That, however, is not what the noble Lord has said; but he talks of the paltry objections which have been made to his measure, and of the paltry course of conduct pursued in the House in regard to it. But what does the noble Lord himself do? Parliament is to be reformed, and he commences the Session by introducing three measures of Parliamentary Reform. The representation of England, of Ireland, and of Scotland are all to be amended. The representation of England, however, is to be the model representation, in accordance with which the others are to be fashioned: and the noble Lord is stern and stiff

as to the conditions upon which this Amendment of the representation of the country is to be accomplished. The noble Lord remembers very well that, when in opposition, he gave a programme upon which he claimed a verdict from Parliament which led to its dissolution, and which forced the country, somewhat against its will, to what probably was a premature decision, speaking under the responsibility of an expectant Minister, he defined the franchise on which he called for a verdict from Parliament and an opinion from the country. But what have we heard to-night? That two of the three Reform Bills are to be given up; and that, with regard to the other, the House may do what it likes with the franchise! Thus the high policy which destroyed a Ministry and dissolved a Parliament has melted away! He will accept anything, if the House will but agree to something that may shuffle this great impediment to progress out of the course. Anything the House will settle by the end of the Session will be accepted by the Government! Well, that may be very discreet; it may be a very wise course for the noble Lord, in his present position, to give these moderate counsels and make these temperate offers; but, I ask, is this the Minister who ought to talk of 'paltry' behaviour on the part of the House of Commons? Having just occupied such a position, and made such an address as the noble Lord has done, while all that has occurred is still fresh in the memory of Parliament and the country, is this the Minister who should regard the conduct of this House as 'paltry?' The House listened, I am sure, with no hostile feeling while, calmly and in well-selected words, the noble Lord stated the course he intends to take; but every one must have felt that the policy he has recommended to-night offers

a strange contrast to the policy he recommended from this bench with respect to Parliamentary Reform. And the tone and temper with which this measure was brought before us when the House first met, contrasted with that of the statement made by the noble Lord to-night, must not be looked on merely in relation to the convenience of the Minister, or as a mere consequence of the party conflicts of this House. The question is too great and has too deep an interest for such considerations. The noble Lord, after all his fanfaronade in Opposition, after having fully matured his scheme, in the responsible position of a Minister of the Crown, comes forward to-night and proposes that we should reconstruct the whole constituency of England, totally omitting the consideration of the constituencies of the two sister kingdoms. To say nothing else of it, is this a constitutional course? I will not say it is a 'paltry' course, but certainly it is a way of cutting the Gordian knot which I think the House, on reflection, will hardly sanction or admire.

We have always heard, when this question of Parliamentary Reform was brought forward, that the Bills reconstructing and revising the constituency of the three kingdoms should proceed *pari passu*; and that there were sound constitutional reasons for such a course in 1832 no one can dispute. But of late years other questions have arisen. We have had claims by Members for Scotland and by Members from Ireland for a greater share in the representation to those countries. We have always told them that the proportion of Members could not be settled in a manner satisfactory to us without taking the claims of English constituencies into consideration. What will Members from Ireland and Scotland say

now, when they are told that the question of the representation of England is to be decided in this month of June, 1860, and that the revision and resettlement of their constituent bodies is to be postponed certainly for another year? What will become of their claims for an increased representation? I give no opinion on those claims now—it is unnecessary. But I must remind the House that no Gentleman from Ireland or from Scotland will be able to urge such claims with any effect when the question of the English representation has once been settled to the satisfaction of this country.

Suppose, notwithstanding the tranquil state of public affairs—and certainly we have a description of the present state of things which, coming from the lips of the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, must be considered most encouraging—suppose the tranquil state of affairs happens to be changed in the course of next year, what then would be the situation of Gentlemen from Scotland and from Ireland? It may be most inconvenient—nay, it may be impossible—to amend the representation of Ireland and Scotland next year. Notwithstanding the all-pervading tranquillity of Europe, the noble Lord may find troubles next year which may so absorb and engross public attention, and so monopolise the care and watchfulness of the Government—especially of the statesman who occupies the office which the noble Lord now fills—that we may not find time to amend the representation of Ireland and Scotland. Well, and what are you going to do with the amended representation of England? Do you mean to appeal in the interval to that revised constituent body? Are we to have a partial dissolution of Parliament? Are the Members of Parliament for England elected by the new constituency to meet here

the Members for Ireland and Scotland elected by the old? Or, in the midst of your difficulties, will you seek to avoid this embarrassing state of affairs by having no dissolution whatever? What, then, will be our position? We who represent England will sit here in a condemned Parliament. Session after Session, year after year, we shall have large bodies of our countrymen saying—'That man calls himself the Member for Buckinghamshire. I have a vote in the election of Members of Parliament, but I never voted for him; and he has no right to be there!' Though I can, perhaps, bear such a test as well as most, I can well conceive a state of things that might be very embarrassing to some hon. Gentlemen on either side of the House.

When is this to happen, and at what time is it that Parliament is to be placed in so uncertain and inconvenient a position? I cannot agree with the noble Lord in that sanguine view which, animated by his faithful adherence to the principles of Parliamentary Reform, he has to-night taken of the prospects of the country. I am not, and I never have been, an alarmist. I know it is possible to exaggerate danger, and that exaggeration of danger is as likely to lead to a depression of public feeling, as it may sometimes induce a high and patriotic tone of mind; but taking the calmest and gravest view of public affairs, I think I am justified in saying that much is going on that may, and should, excite the anxiety and engross the attention of the country. Is this, then, a period when Parliament should be left in the dislocated state in which the plan—for I cannot call it the policy—of the noble Lord contemplates leaving it? I cannot believe that on calm reflection the House can sanction the policy of dealing with the representation of England, without

at the same time dealing with the representation of the sister kingdoms. I cannot believe that the House will run the chance of leaving the representation of England, condemned as a Legislature, with the prospect of meeting next year in the midst of immense danger, and amid all those circumstances which will require that the country should look up to us with respect and confidence, which cannot be if an Act passes both Houses declaring that the representatives of England are not competent to the performance of their duties, and are not worthy of public confidence.

This is a grave position. The noble Lord has come forward to-night, not to make a mere ordinary observation on going into Committee of Supply, but to announce a policy in dealing with these measures which will startle the whole country. He has made an announcement which, in a constitutional, in a national point of view, is one of the gravest announcements ever made to Parliament—namely, that we should reform the representation of England without any security that the representation of Ireland and Scotland shall be reformed. Such a proposition has never before been made to Parliament by any Minister. Is there anything urgent that we should pursue so unprecedented, so indecorous a course? On the contrary, the noble Lord, even at this immense price, does not contemplate accomplishing the policy which he recommends. Whatever he has said respecting the working classes, he has no conviction of the absolute and Imperial necessity of the measure which he originally brought forward; nor has he any conviction that if it were carried it would accomplish and fulfil its purpose. What does he tell us? 'If you do not like this, for God's sake propose something else, and I give you to understand that your pro-

position will be received by the Government in a candid and fair spirit.' What does that mean? It means that the Government have no settled policy whatever which they intend to carry out. Giving up Ireland, giving up Scotland, coming to the Members for England and asking them to place themselves in the despicable position described, calling upon the House to legislate in this scrambling fashion—all this proves that there is no conviction of the necessity of this measure, no confidence in its provisions. It shows that the noble Lord, from the first, exercising a fatal influence—as I told him when I sat opposite to him, and he occupied these (the Opposition) benches—exercising a sinister influence on the fortunes of his party and on his own reputation, was induced to recommend a policy in Opposition which it is impossible for him to accomplish as a Minister. It shows that the noble Lord is hazarding the safety of the country, in order, not that he may realise a fair reputation, but that he may terminate the question in a manner in no way dignified, and which is hardly respectable, by recognising that in Opposition he was tempted to pursue an unwise, immature, and —I will now say—even a factious policy.

Then the noble Lord turns round with what I should have thought was mock indignation to one of his supporters, who had absolutely been so presumptuous as to conceive some decent means to extricate himself and his colleagues from the painful position they occupy. One hon. Gentleman thinks it would be just as well that we should wait till we have accurate, authoritative information as to the number of the population. This the noble Lord thinks paltry, compared with his own conduct. Why, the noble Lord has virtually confessed to-night that he is prepared to give up the marrow of

his Bill, that he is prepared to change the rate of franchise which, when in Opposition, he laid down as indispensable; and with what face or reason can the statesman who brings forward a measure for amending the representation of the people, and who founds his measure on the principle of numbers, turn round and reproach his supporter for saying, 'If this be the principle on which your measure is to be based, let us at least take care that we have the most ample, the most authentic, as well as the most novel and recent information on the subject?'

I make these comments on the remarks of the noble Lord. I think they are fair and just comments. Yielding none of the opinions which I have ever expressed in this House upon Parliamentary Reform—believing, as I hope I may, that upon this subject, the 'Quarterly Review' notwithstanding, I am expressing the opinions of Gentlemen around me—I am not afraid to say that I think it most impolitic at this moment to attempt a settlement such as that projected by the noble Lord. If, indeed, the noble Lord had the power to deal comprehensively and completely with this question—if he came forward and said, 'I have here a comprehensive policy for England, for Ireland and for Scotland, and the principles and conditions upon which we propose the power should be allotted in these countries have been long considered and deeply matured; by them we are prepared to stand or fall; and even perhaps with impending war and impending revolution we feel that such a policy will strengthen the commonwealth, increase the public courage, and animate the public spirit of England'—in that case we might deem the noble Lord and his colleagues rash; we might think them ill-advised; we

might regard the occasion as full of danger; but all must admit that this would be the policy, assured and determined, of eminent men, such as they undoubtedly are, and that, if not entitled to adoption, it would at least command respect. But when, in a moment of undoubted danger, when at a period of almost certain peril, the noble Lord comes forward after all with no policy, with a compromise which, to use his own epithet, I must, indeed, call 'paltry,' I see no safety in such a course, I recognise no security in such proceedings; but I feel that at a time when this House should stand high and the country should be united, we are recommended to take a course which will enfeeble the one and may dishonour the other.

JUNE 7, 1860.

On Sir James Fergusson's Motion to postpone the order of the day for going into Committee on the Reform Bill for England till after the Scotch and Irish Reform Bills had been read a second time.

SIR GEORGE GREY, The Lord Advocate (MR. MONCREIFF), MR. BRIGHT, VISCOUNT PALMERSTON, and others opposed the motion, which was supported by LORD JOHN MANNERS, MR. LONGFIELD, MR. GEORGE, MR. WHITESIDE, and SIR HUGH CAIRNS.

Mr. DISRAELI: Sir, I congratulate the noble Lord* on his first speech on the Reform Bill, and I am not at all surprised that he should have fallen into some remarkable errors when speaking upon the subject, because hitherto he has taken not so much interest as might have been anticipated from a Minister so peculiarly responsible for the introduction of this measure. It is only because the noble Lord has not until this night taken a part in our debates, that I can at all account for that total misconception of what has been going on in the House with respect to this measure for the last three months which has characterised every statement the noble Lord has made this evening. What is the complaint of the noble Lord? The noble Lord does not deny that the business of the House with regard to this measure has been carried on in a most unsatisfactory manner. The noble Lord does not deny that

* Lord Palmerston, the Prime Minister, had maintained throughout these debates a remarkable silence, broken now for the first time.

here we are advanced in the month of June, and have not yet arrived at Committee on this Bill. The noble Lord is astonished at the position in which his Government is placed with this measure, and then the noble Lord, with some rashness, as I think I shall show, falls to scolding the House, and says the delay which he has experienced has been unreasonable, unconstitutional, and irrational. Not being sufficiently acquainted with the conduct of this measure, which has been left to others, the noble Lord thinks of course that the delay has been occasioned entirely by the Opposition. Why, it was only on Monday last that the Government proposed to go into Committee. Here we are discussing the question upon Thursday, and the noble Lord accounts for the little progress which the measure has made by the vexatious delays experienced, when it is on the records of this House that the Government themselves, having the management of the business of the House, having generally all the days which are usually devoted to private Members entirely at its disposal, only last Monday proposed to go into Committee.

But before the appointment of last Monday let us see what was the conduct of this House. What was the conduct of this factious Opposition seeking every delay and opposing to this constitutional proposition of the Minister all the devices which the forms of the House will permit, to prevent the progress of a measure, of which the noble Lord is so enamoured? Does the noble Lord complain that the second reading was not opposed? Is that a sign of faction? Was that a means of delay? Does the noble Lord complain that upon so important a measure—admitting, as he says we do, the principle of this Bill—the House, not

the Opposition merely, should have taken that constitutional and solemn occasion to discuss what may be the consequences of the application of that principle in its various details, as they occurred to them in the course of that discussion? Was a debate of five days' length so unreasonable? Was that a space of time so unusual for a discussion upon such a subject that the noble Lord is justified in turning round upon the House and accusing it of delay? [Several hon. MEMBERS: 'Six days.'] Whether five or six days, who are responsible for the length of that discussion? Is it the Opposition? I think it was stated, and correctly stated, that in numbers, and, I believe, also in length, the majority of speeches were made by the supporters of the noble Lord.

The noble Lord turns round to us and says that there is only one question to ask, 'Are you in favour of a Reform Bill or not?' I say that if the noble Lord wants information upon that subject, I recommend him to apply to the hon. Member for the City of Edinburgh (Mr. Black). Let the noble Lord ask him whether he is in favour of a Reform Bill? He sits in his immediate vicinity, and is in close political contiguity and sympathy with the noble Lord. For aught I know he is sitting now behind the noble Lord, and he can ask the question in a whisper. If the noble Lord is not satisfied with the opinion of the representative of that enlightened capital, the modern Athens, let him ask the hon. Member for Bristol (Mr. H. Berkeley) what is his opinion, and whether he is in favour of the Government Reform Bill? And if the hon. Member for Bristol in private conversation indulges in that invective and sarcasm for which he is publicly distinguished, I would recommend the noble

Lord to address his enquiry to a graver mind—to the hon. Gentleman who must share his confidence, because he owes to his patronage his eminent post—the Member for Salford (Mr. Massey). Let him ask the hon. Member for Salford whether he is in favour of Parliamentary Reform?

Sir, the noble Lord may address this question to a great number of Gentlemen on his side of the House. Here, perhaps, we have taken refuge in more general views. We have stated some large constitutional objections to the course adopted by the noble Lord and his colleagues. But, for minute criticism —for vigilant captiousness, for a devotion to details which appears to be prompted by a sentiment of personal panic, I should say on this measure that the great Liberal party were more distinguished than the Gentlemen who sit on the Opposition benches. Parliament met early—at an unusual period. For a whole fortnight nothing was done. Why was not the Reform Bill introduced? I have shown the House that when the second reading took place the duration of the debate was not unusual, and was, indeed, only becoming such a theme. I have shown that the greater portion of that debate, and the portion most adverse to the merits of the Bill, came from the Ministerial benches and from the habitual supporters of the Government. I have shown that when, weeks ago, that debate was closed the Government did not propose to go into Committee until last Monday, the 4th of June, and now I ask the House and the country whether, under these circumstances, and in this state of affairs, the Minister is justified in the assertions which he has made this evening, and the tone which he has adopted upon the subject?

But is this all? Not a tithe of the case. The noble Lord says we did not oppose even the second reading of the measure, but that we took other means to protract discussion and provoke opposition. What means? I deny the charge. Look at the records of the House, and examine those who are the authors of the Amendments to the Motion that you, Sir, do leave the chair. Where do they sit? Who are the Members who have suggested Amendments by which this measure might be arrested and ultimately defeated?

I need not refer again to the hon. and much respected Gentleman who gave notice of the Motion for referring the Reform Bill to a Select Committee (Mr. Massey), a Motion, the nature of which very much fluttered the noble Lord the Member for the City of London, but which lit up the countenances of many hon. Members opposite with a sparkling air of relief, encouraging to all who beheld them. But what is the state of the House at this moment? It is true there has been an Amendment to the Motion that the Speaker do leave the chair; but who has made it? Is it a Conservative Member who is to be held responsible for all the delays that have taken place, and whose conduct is to be the excuse for the clumsy manner in which this Bill has been conducted? I do not possess the confidence of the hon. Gentleman who moves this Amendment; nor is that surprising, for he always sits behind the noble Lord, and when he made this Amendment he boasted that he had supported the noble Lord in almost every division for many years. Is it to be endured, then, that in such circumstances, instead of turning round to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, the hon. Member for Bristol, and his most confidential friend the author

of this Amendment, the noble Lord, in total ignorance of what has been going on in the House—as it were just awakened from those rosy slumbers into which he always falls when the subject of Reform is before the House — like an Ephesian sleeper, starts from his dream, exclaiming 'God bless my soul, what's all this? It is the 7th of June and we are not in Committee on the Reform Bill. I will make a great declaration. We have been beset with vicious, factious Motions for delay!' And then the noble Lord denounces the factious and unconstitutional conduct of the party opposite to him, while all the time the noble Lord's intimate friends and supporters, who, as representing great cities, he ought to be proud of, are the persons of whom he should complain. The noble Lord, in ignorance of all the warnings so solemnly given, of all the predictions put forth, and in defiance of all the calculations that have been made, comes forward on this the 7th of June for the first time, and condescends to say a word, I will not say in favour of, but about the Reform Bill.

But let us see what we are doing this evening. The noble Lord is clearly in error as to all that has taken place this evening. I am not surprised at it, as the noble Lord was not here, having been present, probably, in a gayer and more brilliant scene. I would recommend to the noble Lord that in future he should adhere to the salutary rule that has regulated his Parliamentary conduct throughout the Session, and not venture again to speak either about the Reform Bill or the proceedings in this House with regard to it; because he has entirely misrepresented the Motion of my hon. Friend behind me (Sir James Fergusson), who, in a speech of great spirit and intelligence, introduced the subject before us to-night, and who was led to

take the particular course which he did adopt in consequence of an intimation from you, Sir, that it was not competent for him to propose another Motion of which he had given notice. The hon. Gentleman, believing that he was following the proper Parliamentary course, made the Motion which is now before us.

Let me now say one word as to what the noble Lord has at some length urged about the alleged opposition and criticism of this Bill by the House. Hitherto there has been no opposition; but there ought to be no criticism, on this measure, says the noble Lord, because we are all agreed in principle, and therefore discussion, except in Committee, is not to be tolerated. What does the noble Lord mean by saying we are all agreed in principle? It is desirable to have a true and distinct conception of the use of the term. The noble Lord says that before the Government of the Earl of Derby there were two parties—one for and one against Reform, and that he says was a convenient system. No doubt a very convenient system to the Liberal party! In Opposition they always constructed and organised themselves on the principle of Parliamentary Reform; but when they got into office nothing was ever done. The question was left open in detail to any individual who was entirely irresponsible as a Minister. This game had gone on for a long time. Three Prime Ministers had recommended Her Majesty to draw the attention of Parliament in Her Speech from the Throne to the Amendment of the representation of the people, and had laid Bills on the subject before the House of Commons. The late Government were of opinion that, after all that had occurred, seeing that, Session after Session, questions of Parliamentary Reform had been carried in detail by majorities, though not acted upon,

it was advisable to bring in a measure. I will not argue now on the merits or demerits of that measure, but I must tell the noble Lord, as he commenced the controversy, that we brought forward that measure because, in our opinion, it was a Conservative measure, and we view his measure with suspicion, because we think its tendencies are not Conservative. It is very well to talk of being agreed in principles. All depends upon the application of those principles. The noble Lord is by no means justified in saying that because we may agree in the principle of Parliamentary Reform, and in some extension of the franchise, that therefore we are not bound to take into our consideration what may be the possible consequences of the measure now in our hands. I do not think that would be a wise course to take; on the contrary, the time that has been taken up, from accident in some degree, but in a much greater from the aversion of the noble Lord's supporters to this Bill, has tended much to enlighten the public mind, and when we are in Committee, if ever we get there, we shall be able to consider the principles which the noble Lord has laid down with much greater effect and with much more advantage to the community.

These have been the principal topics of the noble Lord's speech, but he hardly addressed one syllable to the question immediately under our consideration. Absent, I suppose, from the House during the best part of the evening, he must have entered in clear ignorance of what had taken place in that absence. He must have supposed that we were continuing the debate on the 'vexatious Amendment" made by one of his principal supporters. He can hardly lay it down as a principle that, when the Government have

made an important announcement that they will not proceed with the Amendment of the representation of the people so far as Scotland and Ireland are concerned, the House should not desire to consider the new position in which they are placed, and should not stop in a precipitate career to enquire what may be the constitutional consequences of such a course. The noble Lord has not referred to the dilemma in which he was placed by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Belfast (Sir Hugh Cairns), or, if he did just refer to it, he did not in any degree extricate himself from it. There is something even beyond that dilemma on which he has not touched, or at least has said just enough about it to show that he was scared at the difficulty which was placed before him, and which he found it impossible to avoid.

The noble Lord proposes that we shall this year Reform, as is the general phrase, or rather amend, the representation of the people—that is, largely increase the constituent body of the country, and bring in a new class, and that class belonging to a much lower sphere of society than that which now enjoys the suffrage. He tells us now very differently from what was told us by his colleagues: 'When this Bill is passed we shall not have time to deal with Scotland and Ireland, and we shall not consider ourselves justified, nor do we think any Minister would consider himself justified in counselling the Sovereign to exercise Her prerogative until the Amendment of the representation of Ireland and Scotland is also accomplished.' That the noble Lord has announced now for the first time in unhesitating and unqualified terms. But what is the security that next year the representation of Scotland and Ireland will be amended? These

are not times on which we can count on such results. I could dwell much on that point, but I will not at the present moment; but, admitting that next year these two great Imperial results are achieved, the noble Lord will not deny this, that, thanks to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, we shall have the whole question of the taxation of the country to consider next year, and under circumstances most difficult, most liable to misconception in the public mind, and most calculated to create disquietude and discontent among the masses who are to be enfranchised, and that these grave questions of finance are to be settled not only by a moribund, but a condemned and dishonoured Parliament. Is that a question unworthy of the discussion of the House of Commons? What have we been discussing to-night but that question? It is not one to be settled by the reckless raillery with which the noble Lord has treated it to-night. It is one of the gravest questions which can be brought before the House, and we should be unworthy of our position, we should, indeed, have offered an unanswerable argument for the reform and reconstruction of the House, if, under such circumstances, we attempted to evade the difficulty.

So much for the speech of the noble Lord, and for his unfounded charge against the Tory party of having offered to his suspicious and, perhaps, perilous legislation unnecessary delay. I think I have answered that point. So much, too, for the noble Lord's argument that, because he has chosen arbitrarily to assume that we have agreed to what he conveniently styles the principle of his measure, we are to be debarred from contemplating and considering in a statesmanlike manner what must be the consequence of the application of that principle to the state of society in which we live.

So far, in the third place, as to the remarks of the noble Lord with regard to the important theme which has engaged the attention of the House to-night—not, as I think, in a languid debate, but in a discussion introduced with much ability, under circumstances most justifiable, and sustained on both sides with that power which the interest of the subject must inspire. The noble Lord has made no satisfactory reply. We have been favoured with his virgin speech on Reform, but the noble Lord has not treated the subject in a way which inspires me with confidence in the manner in which the Government is going to deal with it. The noble Lord, indeed, has left a painful impression on the House that he has taken up this subject rather from party necessity than from political conviction. The noble Lord has challenged us to a division. On these grounds I meet him; and I look to the result of that division without apprehension.

JUNE 11, 1860.

On the withdrawal of the Reform Bill.

Mr. DISRAELI: Sir, I think Her Majesty's Government have taken a wise and not undignified course. It is much better, under the circumstances in which the House finds itself with regard to the progress of public business, that the Government should at once have made up their mind as to the course which they are to adopt, rather than have allowed this Bill to go into Committee, to waste more time, without any prospect of coming to a satisfactory result, preventing what I think we shall now find ourselves able to accomplish—the carrying on the business of the House with great effect and great unanimity on both sides.

I should not have wished for a moment to touch on the subject of the Bill now about to be withdrawn; but the noble Lord made an allusion, which ought to be hardly passed without comment. The noble Lord (Lord John Russell), referring—as is his custom on such occasions—to the pedigree of progress, seemed to intimate that on this side of the House there could be no authentic claim to assist in it. But I beg the noble Lord and the House to remember that this Bill is withdrawn, not from any successful opposition, or from any opposition of any kind that has been offered to the real and *bonâ fide* Amendment of the representation of the people of England. This Bill has not advanced, because, unfortunately for the Government, they were this year encumbered with a great mass of

public business of a character which rendered it utterly impossible, with any support, to have carried a Bill of this kind through the House. And as there have been complaints on both sides of the causes of delay, I may be permitted to observe that the real cause of this delay is, in fact, that the Government have undertaken other questions of such importance, of such magnitude, and encumbered with such details, that it was physically and morally impossible for them to carry the measure which they have now so wisely withdrawn. In the heat of debate imputations are sometimes made on both sides of the House without sufficient grounds; but I am persuaded that I am now speaking what is literally the state of the case, when I say that the Government have withdrawn this Bill because it is impossible for them to carry on the necessary and urgent business of the country with this measure still under our notice. The delays and impediments to the Bill have arisen from the Government having other engagements which render progress with the measure impossible.

I am not now expressing any opinion as to the policy of the measure—I do not think this is the occasion on which to enter into any discussion of the kind—but in reference to the general principles laid down by the noble Lord the Member for the City of London as to the necessity of the representation being extended in a certain degree to the working classes, I beg to remind the noble Lord this really has not been the question of controversy. The question of controversy has been as to the means and method of effecting that extension. And, so far as I can read public opinion and watch the progress of intellectual investigation on this subject, I cannot help thinking that, before this House can ever be called on

again to consider it, it will be found that there are more satisfactory modes of effecting that important object than by what I venture to call the coarse expedient of a degradation of the franchise. I would, therefore, state, on the part of Gentlemen on this side of the House, why we receive with perfect approbation the course which Her Majesty's Government has taken in regard to this measure. We recognise that in taking that course they have acted in a spirit of honour and propriety to the House. We give them credit for this, that in the course they have taken they have acted with a sincere desire for the public welfare and the advancement of the public interest. And I can assure Her Majesty's Government that they will receive from us every assistance in the prosecution of the public business which is now so urgent, and to which they have sacrificed—and especially the noble Lord at the head of Foreign Affairs—objects which were dear, and no doubt honourably dear, to them.

I would now sit down had it not been my duty to ask the House for a moment to consider a personal question. If it had concerned myself solely, I should not have taken this opportunity of alluding to it; but it concerns the feelings of an hon. Gentleman, a Member of this House, and it relates also to a subject which must be interesting to every Member of the House; and that is, the relation between the House generally and the individual who may from time to time be responsible for the chief conduct of its business. The other night, in the course of a debate, the hon. Member for Birmingham (Mr. Bright) made a statement, containing no matter offensive to myself, but he said that after the last general election I entered into a compact with some hon. Gentleman on this side of the House that I would introduce a

Bill for the Reform of Parliament, including a 10*l.* franchise for counties and a 6*l.* franchise for boroughs. That statement was very freely circulated, but, like many other statements, I had not thought it necessary particularly to notice it. But as the hon. Member for Birmingham was then about to found an argument on it, I thought I would take the liberty, which I do not often take, of interrupting a speaker. I thought it was as much for his convenience as for myself and for the rest of the House to inform him at once that he was under a complete misapprehension. It appears that the hon. Member for Birmingham afterwards mentioned the name of an hon. Member of this House—the hon. Member for Sunderland (Mr. Lindsay), who was not then present, and that hon. Gentleman is under an impression that I stated that I had not been in communication with him on the subject, and that the statements to that effect which had been circulated were utterly unfounded. I should be glad at all times to remove a painful and unfounded impression from an hon. Gentleman's mind, but I hope the House will not consider it impertinent on my part, as this probably is the last evening we shall, for some time at least, speak on this subject of Parliamentary Reform, if for a few moments I touch briefly on this topic. The subject concerns the relations between the House generally and that individual who may be responsible for the chief conduct of its business. Now, when I had the honour of leading the business of this House, I considered that my time was at the service of any Gentleman on either side of the House, with reference to the conduct of business in this House, or with reference to any business that might concern his constituents; and I see many Gentlemen on the benches opposite who have communicated with me on those

subjects, and I trust that they always received from me every attention and assistance in my power. Well, Sir, I received a letter, among others, requesting an interview, from the hon. Gentleman who now represents the port of Sunderland (Mr. Lindsay). He immediately had an appointment. The appointment was not a secret appointment. The hon. Gentleman came to me at Downing Street on a subject of the greatest importance. It referred to the war commenced between France and Austria, and to the important question of what was contraband of war. I gave the hon. Gentleman all the information and advice I could, and pointed out to him the means by which he could obtain assistance from the other departments. Now it so happened that on that occasion a newspaper was lying on my table, which contained the official announcement—official I mean, in the Opposition sense—that a vote of want of confidence was about to be proposed against Her Majesty's then Government, on the ground that they were going to throw over the question of Parliamentary Reform, and that it must be a point with all sincere Reformers to insist that a measure be brought forward immediately. The hon. Gentleman called my attention to this paragraph, which he had observed before; and he said for his part he did not agree with it, and that he did not believe that a vote of want of confidence was at all one that the House would sanction. He spoke to me—I cannot say it was a confidential interview—it involved just that degree of discretion and reserve which prevents a conversation on business from degenerating into gossip. I spoke to the hon. Gentleman as I speak to hon. Gentlemen every day of my life, when I meet them in the lobby, and I trust that that sort of free intercourse will always exist in this House,

and that it will not be merely in theory that we are an assemblage of Gentlemen, but in practice also. I said to the hon. Gentleman, 'If they mean that they are going to introduce a vote of want of confidence unless we bring forward a Reform Bill immediately, you may rely upon it we are not going to introduce a Reform measure immediately; but neither are we going to throw over the question of Reform.' On a subsequent occasion the hon. Gentleman said to me, 'I can assure you there is a feeling of great dissatisfaction on the part of many independent Members of the House, and if you will only repeat to me that you are not going to throw overboard the Reform question, but intend to deal with it *bonâ fide*, it would have a great effect on public opinion.' And I then replied, 'It is totally impossible for me, or any Minister of the Crown, in private, to say what will be the policy of the Government; what that policy will be must be stated in Parliament, and in no other place. But you may rely upon it we shall not bring forward a Reform Bill this year; that we are not going to throw overboard the question, that we shall endeavour to deal with the question in a satisfactory manner. But so far as a general course is concerned, you may take it for granted that, before the vote is taken, I, as the organ of the Government, shall generally describe our policy, and therefore no persons will be able to pretend that they are ignorant on the subject.' And there the matter ended. I believe the hon. Gentleman the Member for Sunderland had confidence in what I stated; I believe that he wished the Government to remain in office, and I cannot see what imputation there is on his honour in his having entertained that wish. While we were in office, though he voted for the Amendment of the noble Lord (Lord

John Russell), yet he had been amongst those of the Liberal party on whose generous support we had been accustomed to rely. I have no hesitation in saying that the conduct of the hon. Member for Sunderland was perfectly Parliamentary, honourable, and straightforward. I mentioned that in a letter when the hon. Member was unjustly attacked last year. That letter was seen only by a few persons; and as the matter has been brought before the notice of Parliament with so much misapprehension, I thought I would take this opportunity of saying these few words on the subject in order to set the matter right. I take it for granted that the feeling which influences the House is that which influences myself, and that it has no desire to place any barrier to that frank communication which ought to be permitted at all times between the leader of this House and its other Members on whatever side they may sit, or sanction as a rule that a leader, in receiving those opposed to him, should treat them with the utmost reserve. I have now placed fairly and frankly before the House the real state of the case, and I think hon. Members will be of opinion that the course which I took in the matter I was justified in adopting, and that no imputation rests on the hon. Gentleman to whom I allude, for the share which he has had in the transaction.

FEBRUARY 19, 1861.

On Mr. Locke King's Motion, 'That leave be given to bring in a Bill to extend the Franchise in Counties in England and Wales.'

MR. WARNER, MR. DARBY GRIFFITH, MR. BENTINCK, MR. NEWDEGATE, and VISCOUNT PALMERSTON spoke on the Motion.

Mr. DISRAELI: Sir, under the circumstances under which this Bill is introduced to our notice, and after the temperate and sensible remarks of the noble Lord, especially with respect to the future conduct of the Government, considering that the leader of the House does not feel himself justified in opposing the Motion for leave to bring it in, I am not prepared to oppose its introduction, more especially as leave is asked by one who is so well entitled to our courtesy as the hon. Member for East Surrey. Nor should I have risen had not that hon. Gentleman fallen into a great error as to the nature of the measure which I introduced into this House, when he claimed me as a supporter of the principle of his Bill. The hon. Gentleman is under a mistake. He himself was one of the Liberal party who would not allow the Reform Bill of Lord Derby's Government to be read a second time, and I have no doubt that it is in consequence of his precipitate action upon that occasion that he is so ill-acquainted with the details of that measure.

The Bill which I introduced did not adopt the principle for which he contends in the present measure. It

certainly proposed a 10*l.* occupation as a qualification for the suffrage in counties; but the primary qualification was an occupation of land of that annual value—a suffrage very different from that proposed by the hon. Gentleman, and one which, had I been permitted to go into Committee upon that Bill, I should have been able to show would have produced consequences quite different from those which my hon. Friend the Member for West Norfolk (Mr. Bentinck) anticipates will flow from the Bill of the hon. Gentleman. That Bill also embraced, as a secondary suffrage, a 10*l.* occupation of houses, but the primary suffrage was derived from a 10*l.* occupation of land. But was that all? Besides these occupation franchises there were, I think, ten other very important county franchises created by that Bill, of all of which the tendency would have been—I do not use the epithet in a party, but in a political and social sense—of a highly Conservative nature. There was introduced into the counties that lodger franchise to which I attributed very great importance; there was also a franchise arising from the possession of funded and personal property; and a variety of county franchises founded upon intelligence and education; there were also other important regulations with respect to artificial votes, and the boundaries of boroughs. Therefore, the hon. Gentleman is not at all justified in his statement that Gentlemen on this side of the House have adopted the principle which he has so long and consistently advocated, the discussion of which has, however, occupied much valuable public time, and the adoption of which would be prejudicial to the public weal.

After all the criticism which we have at various times heard in this House, I am myself every day more strongly of opinion that measures for the re-

construction of Parliament ought to be large and comprehensive measures. If you cannot pass large and comprehensive measures, the only conclusion which I can draw is that there is no necessity for them; but, when you are dealing with a subject so vast as the reconstruction of Parliament, you require all the responsibility of a Ministry, and all the information and all the regard to various interests which can be secured by it, but which cannot be expected from Gentlemen who arrogate to themselves the title of 'independent Members'—a title to which I trust that we all, even when in office, have a fair claim. An independent Member takes up a fragment of a great subject; he becomes enamoured with the results of his own meditations; he thinks that the conclusions at which he has arrived from the force of his own thought are the only ones which can save the State; and he is too eager to force those conclusions upon the acceptance of Parliament, without reference to the interests which their adoption may injure, but which ought to be duly considered in any scheme which attempts to do justice to the whole country. I have a strong objection to the measure which is introduced to-night by the hon. Gentleman. I think that it would have a very injurious effect upon the country. I think that it would in many counties give power to those who are not fairly connected with the predominant property and the predominant industry of the county; and I also entertain the objections which have been urged with remarkable ability by my hon. Friend the Member for North Warwickshire (Mr. Newdegate), which are well deserving the attention of the House, and which I am sure will command the attention of the public. But this is not the occasion on which to debate the merits

of the measure, because, even with the rigid programme for the conduct of the Government business which has been announced by the noble leader of the House, we probably shall have another opportunity of discussing them; nor should I have touched upon any portion of the scheme had it not been for the misapprehension of the hon. Gentleman with reference to the conduct of the late Government upon this subject.

Totally irrespective of my objection to an isolated measure—totally irrespective of my conviction that you ought not to deal with the subject unless you are prepared to deal with it in a comprehensive manner—totally independent of the objection that it is impossible, in the present temper of the country, to deal with the subject in a comprehensive manner, and giving credit to the Government for being actuated in the course they are taking—not by the mean motives which have been imputed to them by their particular friends, but by that sense of duty which I trust will always influence Gentlemen in their position—I should oppose the measure of the hon. Gentleman. I deeply regret that there appears to be a prospect of the waste of valuable time—of that limited portion of the Session which is accorded to private Members not connected with the Government for their attempts at legislation. I cannot myself conceive at this moment—I am unable to form any clear idea—as to what can be the object of hon. Gentlemen opposite and their supporters in attempting this Reform of the House of Commons by measures of retail. The great wholesale firm have announced that it is a transaction beyond their powers of capital and enterprise. What probability of success, then, can attend these hucksterers, who come forward to satisfy the wants of the nation when the great association has

announced that it is impossible for them to accomplish the feat? Their object cannot be to obtain popularity in the country. I believe, myself, that, on the whole, there is no subject so unpopular in England at present as Parliamentary Reform. Is it to obtain popularity in this House? I will say nothing of my Friends around me, who, I think, during the campaign of Reform last year, behaved with great temper and forbearance, and gave every fair opportunity to the Government to carry their Bill if they could. But I can say something of the feelings of hon. Gentlemen opposite, because, month after month, I watched their countenances, and saw men representing capital cities and large constituencies whose teeth were chattering in their heads when the Order of the Day was read. Their pallid visages could not be concealed from the commonest observers; you found them in the lobbies shaking in their shoes at the threatening invasion of a 6*l.* constituency. Why, Sir, these are traits which convince me that the hon. Gentleman and his friends will obtain no popularity among their co-mates and colleagues in this House by the course they propose to pursue. Well, then, what can be their motive? Is it the honourable object of proving that, though they are taking an unpopular course so far as the country is concerned—though they are taking an odious course so far as their intimate friends are concerned—that they are still consistent, they have not changed their minds, and that, though changes may have occurred in other quarters, they are the same as when they presented themselves upon the hustings? If that be the result which they desire, then I say it is one which they can obtain without wasting the time of Parliament, and without still further injuring that cause of Parliamentary Reform to which they are devoted.

They can have a public meeting; Willis's Rooms may be once more engaged*; and, though no compact may be entered into, still they may make a demonstration which will prove to the country that their opinions are perfectly unchanged, and that whenever an opportunity offers itself they will carry them into effect.

I really wish they would consider the feasibility of such a scheme, because it is only on Wednesdays the noble Lord intends that they shall have an opportunity of bringing forward these measures, and on Wednesdays we have a prospect of some important and interesting legislation. I confess I look forward with dread to a repetition of the scenes of last year. In the House of Commons, especially when you have sat here a good many years, there is a genial feeling, on both sides, of reciprocal respect and regard. Gentlemen on this side are, therefore, averse from a repetition of the sufferings of hon. Gentlemen opposite. Why this unnecessary torture? Why this alarming prospect — such, for example, as that which agitated the Member for the capital of Scotland—again to be held out, to the annoyance of hon. Members and to the waste of public time? I wish, after having performed an act of courtesy to both these Gentlemen, in allowing them to bring in their Bills, some private arrangement could be entered into by which we should hear nothing more of the subject. We ought always, they say, to act in the spirit of the age, and, as the spirit of the age is to offer testimonials to Gentlemen who perform public services,

* 'Willis's Rooms' was the scene where the coalition of 1859, between Lords Palmerston and John Russell and Mr. Bright, was inaugurated. A Reform Bill was the condition of the Union, and the termination of the long estrangement between the two noble Lords was then publicly announced.

I shall be most ready, if they will adopt this course—and in this I am sure I speak the feeling of my friends—to join with the majority opposite in offering to those Gentlemen some mark of our respect and gratitude.

MARCH 13, 1861.

On the second reading of Mr. Locke King's County Franchise Bill.

MR. AUGUSTUS SMITH, MR. DU CANE, MR. ADDERLEY, SIR LAWRENCE PALK, LORD ENFIELD, MR. HUNT, MR. CONINGHAM, MR. ALGERNON EGERTON, SIR GEORGE LEWIS, MR. BERNAL OSBORNE, and LORD JOHN RUSSELL took part in the Debate.

Mr. DISRAELI: Sir, the noble Lord commenced his observations with some of those historical references in which he occasionally indulges for the edification of the House. The noble Lord told us that he remembered the great demand there was for a repeal of the corn laws and for the relief of the Roman Catholics in olden days; how that neglected demand on the part of Parliament led to prolonged and dangerous agitation; and that he, wise by these warnings, felt it his duty in 1851 to deal with the question of Parliamentary Reform. But the noble Lord forgets that there is no analogy between these instances of the repeal of the penal laws against the Roman Catholics and of the corn laws and this question of Parliamentary Reform. There is a fallacy in all the observations of the noble Lord which were drawn from these illustrations, because he forgets that there was a settlement of the Reform question in 1832, while there had not been a settlement as regards the penal laws or the corn laws. They were great grievances which had been neglected—which, in consequence of that neglect, brought about widely-extended dissatisfaction, and led to that state of

affairs which the noble Lord justly laments. But there was a great settlement of Parliamentary Reform in 1832, for which the noble Lord made himself in no slight degree responsible; and, therefore, what the noble Lord had to consider in 1851, when he reopened the question, was, whether the settlement of 1832 had been an adequate and sufficient settlement, and whether the circumstances then existing in 1851 justified him, as Prime Minister, in counselling Her Majesty to recommend a further change in the laws affecting the representation of the people from the Throne. Therefore, I must repeat, the analogy between the historical instances brought forward by the noble Lord—and that not for the first time—is entirely fallacious. But there is no doubt of this—there is no fallacy on this head, that it is the noble Lord who is responsible as the statesman in modern times, who did feel it his duty to revive this question of Parliamentary Reform and bring it again before the consideration of the Legislature.

Sir, our vindication of the course we took—for the noble Lord has referred to the measures we brought forward—is founded upon the conduct of the Ministers who went before us. It is not merely that we found the question recommended three times from the Throne; but the House was in this situation, that we were having a Reform Bill carried in detail. There were different measures on different portions of the main subject brought forward and carried, with all the evils which I maintain are incident to a great constitutional question affecting the distribution of political power being considered in detail. And what are those evils? Not giving a due consideration to the various interests of the country—giving paramount importance to some

interests to the injury of other interests, without that ample information and mature thought which those responsible for power can alone acquire and exercise. Sir, I maintain the soundness of that principle which has been acknowledged by the noble Lord to-night, and which I reassert, that you cannot deal with a subject such as the representation of the people except in a complete and comprehensive manner. The noble Lord himself admits that there is justice in an observation to that effect I made the other night; but the noble Lord while sanctioning that sentiment, with extraordinary inconsistency adds—'I think that sentiment, perfectly just. You can and you ought only to deal with Parliamentary Reform in a complete and comprehensive manner—I agree there with the right hon. Member for Buckinghamshire; but, although nothing can be more sound than that principle, I must make an exception in regard to the county franchise.'

Now, why make an exception in regard to the county franchise? Is the county franchise that portion of the franchise for which we find the largest number of applicants? Is it in the counties where you find persons most eager to claim the possession of the franchise? Is the county constituency in point of number inferior to the borough constituency? Is it not a notorious fact, that the constituency represented by 150 county Members of this House is more numerous than the constituency represented by more than 300 borough Members? Then I want to know, if the noble Lord admits the principle that we ought to deal only in a complete and comprehensive manner with the subject of Parliamentary Reform, on what grounds can the noble Lord justify the exception he is now making?

Now, Sir, the noble Lord has felt, at last, that it was

necessary he should in some degree vindicate the course he took with regard to the measure brought in upon the subject by the late Government. I beg the House to observe that it is not I who introduce the subject. For myself and my colleagues I may say we never complained of the decision at which the House arrived on that or any other measure we brought forward. With, I trust, due self-respect, we always bowed to the decision of the House, and we cheerfully quitted the seats opposite. But when we are attacked on the measures we brought forward, when unintentionally, I presume, misrepresentations are put forward by our successors in office, I trust the House will agree that, in order to explain or vindicate those measures, there is nothing arrogant or intrusive on my part if I for a moment revert to the subject. The noble Lord has to-day, in a spirit of curious revelation, explained to us the cause of that conduct which a couple of years ago astonished—and, I think, in some degree annoyed—the country. We now know the reason why the noble Lord then thought it his duty to oppose the measure of the late Government. Taking out of a measure which included several hundred details one connected with the borough franchise, the noble Lord held it up to public odium and said—'Because faggot votes could by this machinery have been created in a borough, this is the chief reason why I thought it my duty to oppose the measure brought forward by the late Government.' Well, but if that were your chief reason, why did you not mention it in the Resolution which you then asked the House to approve? Extraordinary reserve! extreme delicacy of reticence, that, in the possession of this secret, feeling himself justified in taking the course which cer-

tainly astonished Parliament at the time, the noble Lord did not feel himself justified in communicating to the House the sufficient reason for his conduct! Why, Sir, it is too late in the day to invent these shadows to perplex public opinion. Everybody knows the clear issue that was taken upon the measure which I brought forward as the organ of Lord Derby's Government on the subject of Parliamentary Reform. It was this, or it was nothing—would you, or would you not, lower the borough franchise? That was the broad and intelligible issue. Upon that issue the opinion of the House was taken, and by virtue of that opinion, and in order to carry it into effect, the present Government was formed.

Well, Sir, I am told sometimes that we counselled an appeal to the people, and that the people decided against us. Did they decide against the policy of not lowering the franchise in boroughs? I think it has been pretty well settled by the conduct of the Government, by the conduct of this House, and by the feeling of the public generally, that we measured accurately and soundly, public opinion upon that subject, —that we tested, and wisely, the sentiment of the nation. I do not reproach the noble Lords opposite for not forcing a measure founded on such a principle through the House. I have always given them credit for conscientious opinions in the course they have taken. But what I do protest against, and what I could not pass over in silence, is that the noble Lord on second thoughts—nearly two years afterwards, in consequence of a very general expression of disappointment even from his own supporters, and on his own side of the House, that the Bill of Lord Derby was not allowed a second reading — should now come

forward with this finical reason, which nobody ever heard of before, founded on an obscure detail in a Bill full of details—an obscure detail which nobody can recollect—to vindicate a policy which at the time outraged public opinion, and led to results which we can look to at least without mortification, but which the noble Lord must be framed very differently from other men if he can find in them topics of self-gratulation and self-respect.

Now, Sir, with regard to the Bill before us I object to dealing with this question of the extension of the suffrage but in a complete and comprehensive measure. I deny that we can consider the due and legitimate incidence of the county franchise unless we take into consideration, at the same time, the franchise in the boroughs; and not merely that subject, but unless we take into consideration all which affects the representation of the people in Parliament. That would be with me a sufficient reason for not entering into this discussion. But I will not say, as others have said, that if a large measure were brought before us and this were portion of it I could approve it. I entirely disapprove this measure. I state, without equivocation, that this is not in any degree, either in its form or spirit, the measure which we proposed with respect to the county franchise in our Bill. The other day we were told that the measure we brought forward with respect to the franchise in counties was identical with that brought forward by the hon. Member for East Surrey. It was not so. The primary qualification in our Bill certainly arose from a 10*l.* occupation—but it was a 10*l.* occupation of land — our Bill, too, included a county franchise founded on personal property; a lodger franchise;

franchises founded on the possession of intelligence, and franchises of other kinds. But the mode by which a *bonâ fide* and virtual representation of the landed interest in all its classes was secured, was not confined merely to the invention of franchises. We have been reminded to-night that in that Bill there was a provision that the possessor of a freehold should vote in the locality in which the freehold was placed. At the same time that we agreed that the 10*l.* occupier in unrepresented towns should vote for the county, we also took care that the urban influence should not be overwhelming by regulating that the possessor of a freehold in a town should vote in the locality with which he was legitimately connected. There was no disfranchisement of 40*s.* freeholders in the Bill I brought forward. That charge has been made in this House to-night. A Bill which was not allowed to be read a second time is of course liable to misrepresentation. We looked upon the 40*s.* freehold franchise as one of the soundest, most valuable, and most constitutional in the country; it was the very last we should have dreamt of abolishing. All we proposed was that in a large scheme consisting of so many franchises the elector should vote in the locality in which his qualification was situate.

But is that all? We have heard to-night of the great mischiefs that would occur if the Bill of the hon. Member for East Surrey were carried, by swamping, as the phrase is, the natural constituency of the counties representing the predominant property and prime industry of the counties. Did we not provide against that? Did we not secure in our Bill the revision of borough boundaries? What would occur under the Bill of the hon. Member for East Surrey is

that Manchester or Birmingham, or fifty other great towns, might overwhelm the natural constituency of a county by a population which really is homogeneous with the civic and urban constituency of Manchester or Birmingham. What provision is there against such a result in the Bill of the hon. Member for Surrey? None; our revision of the existing borough boundaries met the difficulty. Take, again, the instance mentioned to-night by my hon. Friend the Member for Cheshire (Mr. Egerton). He is afraid, and naturally, of being overwhelmed by towns like Staleybridge. That is an evil which could not have occurred under our Bill, because Staleybridge would have been represented in this House. I say all our arrangements for the county franchise were framed with this view—while we increased the garrison of the Constitution, while we enlisted in support of the landed interest of the country a great variety of sympathies and influences, we endeavoured to secure for the landed interest that predominance which is necessary to public liberty; and that was the object, and the only object, we had. It was not to secure any petty interest of our own; but we recognised in the due preponderance of the land in the constitutional scheme the best and most efficacious security for local government and public liberty. Sir, I will not trespass further on the time of the House, for the hour is come when we must divide. I may not have completely, but I have at least sincerely, vindicated the course we took when we were in power in proposing a measure on the subject of the extension of the franchise and the representation of the people. I may remind the House still further that in that Bill with respect to the county franchise we had, by a complete system, worked out a self-acting registration, and

by the multiplication of polling places we had been in a position to propose to Parliament that all election expenses should be illegal; and that, Sir, would alone have been a better security for purity of election than the fantastic schemes now proposed. Sir, I am confident that Bill will be appealed to hereafter for the many valuable provisions it contained; and after the attack which the noble Lord has made on it to-night, I will only say, though it was not successful, I am at least as proud of having been the organ of bringing it before the notice of Parliament as the noble Lord can be of having obtained office under the conditions he did, and of the political and constitutional franchises which in consequence he has been enabled to bestow on his countrymen.

MAY 8, 1865.

On the second reading of Mr. Baines's Bill to extend the elective Franchise in Boroughs in England and Wales.

LORD ELCHO moved the previous question, and MR. LOWE, MR. BERNAL OSBORNE, MR. GREGORY, SIR GEORGE GREY, MR. W. E. FORSTER, MR. HORSMAN, and others spoke on the Motion.

Mr. DISRAELI: Sir, I could have wished, and once I almost believed, that it was not necessary for me to take part in this debate. I look on this discussion as the natural Epilogue to the Parliament of 1859. We remember the Prologue. I consider this to be a controversy between the 'educated section of the liberal party,'* and that section of the Liberal party, not entitled, according to their companions and Colleagues, to an epithet so euphuistic and complimentary. But after the speech of the Minister, I hardly think it would become me—representing the opinions of the Gentlemen with whom I am acting on this side of the House—entirely to be silent.

Sir, we have a measure before us to-night which is to increase the franchise in boroughs. I object to that measure. I object to it because an increase of the franchise in boroughs is a proposal to re-distribute political power in the country. I do not think that

* Lord Hartington, when he proposed in 1859 a vote of want of confidence in Lord Derby's Government, counselled a coalition between the Whigs and the Radicals, and described the Whigs as 'the educated section of the Liberal party.'

the distribution of political power in the country ought to be treated partially—from the very nature of things it is impossible, if there is to be a re-distribution of political power, that you can only regard the suffrage as it affects one section of the constituent body. Whatever the proposition of the hon. Gentleman—whether abstractedly it may be expedient or not—this is quite clear, that it must be considered not only in relation to the particular persons with whom it will deal, but in relation to other persons with whom it does not deal, though it would affect them. And, therefore, it has always been clear that if you deal with the subject, popularly called Parliamentary Reform, you must deal with it comprehensively. The arrangements you may make with reference to one part of the constituency may not be objectionable in themselves, but may be extremely objectionable if you consider them with relation to other parts. Consequently, it has been held—and the more we consider the subject the more true and just appears to be the conclusion—that if you deal with the matter you must deal with it as a whole. You must not only consider borough constituencies, you must consider county constituencies; and when persons rise up and urge their claims to be introduced into the constituent body, even if you think there is a plausible case substantiated on their part, you are bound in policy and justice to consider also the claim of other bodies not in possession of the franchise, but whose right to consideration may be equally valid. And so clear is it, when you come to the distribution of power, that you must consider the subject in all its bearings, that even hon. Gentlemen who have taken part in this debate, which is one merely on the borough franchise have not been able to avoid the question of what they

call the re-distribution of seats—a very important part of the question to which I have referred, the distribution of power.

It is easy for the hon. Member for Liskeard (Mr. Bernal Osborne), for example, to rise and say, in supporting this measure for the increase of the borough franchise, that it is impossible any longer to conceal the anomalies of our system in regard to the distribution of seats. 'Is it not monstrous,' he asks, 'that Calne, with 173 voters, should return a Member, while Glasgow returns only two, with a constituency of 20,000?' Well, it may be equally monstrous that Liskeard should return one Member, and that Birkenhead should only make a similar return. Sir, the distribution of seats—as any one must know who has ever considered the subject deeply and with a sense of responsibility towards the country—is one of the most profound and difficult questions that can be brought before the House. It is all very well to treat it in an easy off-hand manner; but how are you to reconcile the case of North Cheshire, of North Durham, of West Kent, and many other counties, where you find a few towns, with an aggregate population, perhaps, of 100,000, returning six Members to this House, while the rest of the population of the county, though equal in amount, returns only two Members? How are you to meet the case of the West Riding in reference to its boroughs, or the case of the representation of South Lancashire in reference to its boroughs? Why, those are more anomalous than the case of Calne. Then there is the question of Scotland. With a population hardly equal to that of the metropolis, and with wealth greatly inferior—probably not more than two-thirds of the amount—Scotland yet possesses forty-eight Members, while the

metropolis has only twenty. Do you Reformers mean to say that you are prepared to disfranchise Scotland in proportion to the population; or that you are going to develope the representation of the metropolis in proportion to its population and property; and so allow a country like England, so devoted to local government and so influenced by local feeling, to be governed by London? And, therefore, when those speeches are made which gain a cheer for the moment, and are supposed to be so unanswerable as arguments in favour of Parliamentary change, I would recommend the House to recollect that this as a question is one of the most difficult and one of the deepest that can possibly engage the attention of the country. The fact is, in the representation of this country other elements enter besides merely population and property—you have to take care that the country itself is represented. That is one reason why I am opposed to the second reading of the Bill—because it deals partially with the subject, and not completely and comprehensively.

Sir, there is another objection which I have to this Bill brought forward by the hon. Member for Leeds, and that is that it is brought forward by the Member for Leeds. I do not consider this a subject which ought to be intrusted to the care and guidance of any individual Member in this House. If there be one subject more than another that deserves the consideration and demands the responsibility of the Government, it certainly is the re-construction of our Parliamentary system; and it is the Government or a political party candidates for power, who recommend a policy, and who will not shrink from the responsibility of carrying that policy into effect if the opportunity be afforded to them, who alone are qualified to deal with such a

question. But, Sir, I shall be told,—as we have been told in a previous portion of the adjourned debate—that the two great parties of the State cannot be trusted to deal with this question, because they have both trifled with it. That is a charge which has been made repeatedly during this discussion and on previous occasions, and certainly a graver one could not be urged in this House.

I am not prepared to admit that even our opponents have trifled with this question. We have had a very animated account by the right hon. Gentleman who has just addressed us as to what may be called the Story of the Reform Measures. It was animated but it was not accurate. Mine will be accurate, though perhaps not animated. I am not prepared to believe that English Statesmen, though they be opposed to us in politics and may sit on opposite Benches, could ever have intended to trifle with this question. I think that possibly they may have made great mistakes in the course which they took; they may have miscalculated, they may have been misled; but I do not believe that any men in this country, occupying the posts—the eminent posts—of those who have recommended any re-construction of our Parliamentary system in modern days, could have advised a course which they disapproved. They may have thought it perilous—they may have thought it difficult—but though they may have been misled I am convinced they must have felt that it was necessary. Let me say a word on behalf of one with whom I have had no political connection and to whom I have been placed in constant opposition in this House when he was an honoured Member of it—I mean Lord Russell. I cannot at all agree with the lively narrative of the right hon. Gentleman, according

to which Parliamentary Reform was but the creature of Lord John Russell, whose Cabinet, controlled by him with the vigour of a Richelieu, at all times disapproved his course; still less can I acknowledge that merely to amuse himself, or in a moment of difficulty to excite some popular sympathy, Lord John Russell was a statesman always with a Reform Bill in his pocket, ready to produce it and make a display. How different, says the right hon. Gentleman, from that astute and sagacious statesman now at the head of Her Majesty's Government, whom I almost hoped to have seen in his place this evening. I am sure it would have given the House great pleasure to have seen him here, and I certainly did hope that the noble Lord would have been enabled to be in his place and prepared to support his policy.

According to the animated but not accurate account of the right hon. Gentleman who has just sat down, all that Lord Derby did was to sanction and humour the caprices of Lord John Russell. Now, I must remind the right hon. Gentleman that he has forgotten the history of the subject, recent though it be. It is true that Lord John Russell, when Prime Minister, originally recommended that Her Majesty in the Speech from the throne, should call the attention of Parliament to the condition of our representative system. There is no doubt about that. But Lord John Russell unfortunately shortly afterwards retired from his eminent position. He was soon after succeeded by one of the most considerable statesmen of our days—a statesman not connected with the political school of Lord John Russell, who was supported by a whole staff of eminent statesmen who had been educated in the same school and under the same distinguished master. This eminent statesman, however, is entirely forgotten by the right

hon. Gentleman, although he took office with every advantage. The right hon. Gentleman overlooks the fact that Lord Aberdeen, when Prime Minister, and when all the principal places in his Cabinet were filled with the disciples of Sir Robert Peel, did think it his duty to recommend the same counsel to Her Majesty. But this is an important, though not the only important item in the history of the Reform Bill which has been ignored by the right hon. Gentleman. But is this all? The time came when Lord Aberdeen gave place to another statesman, one who has been complimented to-night on his sagacity in evading the subject—as if such a course would be a subject for congratulation. Let me vindicate the policy of Lord Palmerston in his absence. He did not evade the question. Lord Palmerston followed the example of Lord John Russell. He followed the example, also, of Lord Aberdeen, and recommended Her Majesty to notice the subject of Parliamentary Reform in the Speech from the Throne.

What becomes, then, of the lively narrative of the right hon. Gentleman, and the inference, and conclusions which he drew from it? Not only is his account inaccurate, but it is injurious, as I take it to the honour of public men. Well, now you have three Prime Ministers—not one merely from caprice or personal littleness—bringing forward the question of Parliamentary Reform; you have Lord John Russell, Lord Aberdeen, and you have even that statesman who, according to the account of the right hon. Gentleman, was so eminent for his sagacity in evading the subject altogether. Now, let me ask the House to consider the position of Lord Derby when he was called to power—a position which you cannot rightly understand if you accept as correct the fallacious statements of the right

hon. Gentleman. I will give the House an account of this subject the accuracy of which I believe neither side will impugn. It may not possibly be without interest, and will not, I am sure, be without significance. Lord Derby was sent for by Her Majesty, an unwilling candidate for office—for let me remind the House that at that moment he had an adverse majority of 140 in the House of Commons, and I therefore do not think that Lord Derby was open to any imputation in hesitating to accept political responsibility under such circumstances. Lord Derby laid these considerations before Her Majesty. I speak, of course, with reserve, yet really say nothing now which I have not been authorised to say before in the discussion of these matters in this House. But when a Government comes in on Reform and remains in power six years without passing any measure of the kind, it is possible that these circumstances, too, may be lost sight of. Lord Derby advised Her Majesty not to form a Government under his influence, because there existed so large a majority against him in the House of Commons, and because this question of Reform was placed in such a position that it was impossible not to deal with it, and he did not wish to deal with it. For it should be remembered that Lord Derby was a Member of the famous Cabinet which carried the Reform Bill in 1832. Lord Derby, as Mr. Stanley, was in the House of Commons one of the most efficient promoters of the measure. Lord Derby believed that the Act of 1832 had tended to effect the purpose for which it was designed; and although no man, superior, as he is, to prejudice, could fail to see that some who were qualified for the exercise of the franchise were still debarred from the privilege, yet he could not also fail to perceive the danger which would arise in a country like England

from constantly tampering with the franchise, and that therefore it was inexpedient to deal with the question. On these grounds Lord Derby declined the honour which Her Majesty desired to confer upon him.

Her Majesty was then left without advisers, and the appeal to Lord Derby was repeated. Under such circumstances it was impossible for any English statesman to hesitate. But I am bound to say that although there was no contract or understanding further than that which prevails among men, however different their politics, who love their country and wish to maintain its greatness, still there was an understanding at the time among men of weight on both sides of the House that the position in which the Reform question was placed was one embarrassing to the Crown and not creditable to the House, and that any Minister trying his best to deal with it under these circumstances would receive not a pledge of support to his measure—that would be impossible and preposterous—but would be insured the candid consideration of the House. It was thought, moreover, that the time had possibly arrived when both parties might unite in endeavouring to bring about a solution to the advantage and benefit of the country. Under these circumstances Lord Derby gave his mind to the measure. And yet, says the right hon. Gentleman who has just addressed you, it was only in 1860 that the portentous truth flashed across the mind of the country that the question of Parliamentary Reform was this—was it possible to admit a portion of the working classes to the enjoyment of the franchise, without impairing the constitution of the country—it was only in 1860, after so many Ministers had been dealing with the question for so many years that this real state of the question flashed upon the conscience of the country.

All I can say is that this was the question, and the only question, which engaged the attention of Lord Derby's Cabinet in 1858. The question was, whether they could secure the franchise for a certain portion of the working classes who, by their industry, their intelligence, and their integrity showed that they were worthy of such a possession, without at the same time overwhelming the rest of the constituency by the numbers of those whom they admitted. That, Sir, was the only question which occupied the attention of the Government of Lord Derby; and yet the right hon. Gentleman says that it was only in 1860 that the attention of the public was first called to the subject, when, in fact, the question of Parliamentary Reform had been before them for more than ten years, and on a greater scale than that embraced by the measure under consideration this evening.

I need not remind the House of the reception which Lord Derby's Bill encountered. It is neither my disposition nor, I am sure, that of any of my Colleagues, to complain of the votes of this House on that occasion, nor to indulge in reproaches against any of its Members. Political life must be taken as you find it, and so far as I am concerned not a word shall escape me on the subject. But from the speeches made the first night of this debate, and from the speech made by the right hon. Gentleman this evening, I deem it my duty to vindicate the conduct pursued by the party with which I act. I say we were perfectly well aware of the great question which it was our business to solve, and I say this now which I would not have said under other circumstances, that I believe that the measure which we brought forward was the only one which has attempted to meet its difficulties. Totally irrespective

of other modes of dealing with the question, there were two franchises especially proposed on that occasion which, in my mind, would have done much towards solving them. The first was the franchise founded upon personal property, and the second the franchise founded upon partial occupation. Those two franchises, irrespective of other modes by which we attempted to meet the want and the difficulty—those two franchises, had they been brought into Committee of this House, would, in my opinion, have been so shaped and adapted that they would have effected those objects which the majority of the House desire. We endeavoured in that Bill to make proposals which were in the genius of the English Constitution. It is easy to speak of the English Constitution as a mere phrase. We did not consider the Constitution a mere phrase. We knew that the Constitution of this country is a monarchy tempered by the authority of co-ordinate estates of the realm. We knew that the House of Commons is an estate of the realm. We knew that an estate of the realm is a political body, invested with political power for the Government of the country and for the public good; therefore a body founded upon privilege and not upon right. It is therefore in the noblest and properest sense of the word an aristocratic body, and from the first the estate of the Commons has had that character. From that characteristic the Reform Bill of 1832 did not derogate; and if at this moment we could contrive, as we proposed to do in 1859, to add considerably to the number of the constituent body, we should not change that characteristic, but it would still remain founded upon an aristocratic principle.

Well, now the right hon. Gentleman the Secretary of State has addressed us to-night in a remarkable

speech. He also takes up the history of Reform; but before I touch upon some of the features of that speech it is my duty to refer to the statements which he made with regard to the policy which the Government of Lord Derby was prepared to assume after the general election of 1859. By a total misrepresentation of the character of the Amendment proposed by Lord John Russell, which threw the Government in 1859 into a minority, and by quoting a passage from a very long speech of mine in 1859, the right hon. Gentleman most dexterously conveyed these two propositions to the House—first, that Lord John Russell had proposed an Amendment to our Reform Bill, by which the House declared that no Bill could be satisfactory by which the working classes were not admitted to the franchise—one of our main objects being that the working classes should in a great measure be admitted to the franchise; and secondly, that after the election I was prepared, as the organ of the Government, to give up all the schemes of those franchises founded upon personal property, partial occupation, and other grounds, and to substitute a Bill lowering the borough qualification. That, in the first place, conveyed to the House a totally inaccurate idea of the Amendment of Lord John Russell. There was not a single word in that Amendment about the working classes. There was not a single phrase upon which that issue was raised; nor could it have been raised, because our Bill, whether it could have effected the object or not, was a Bill which proposed greatly to enfranchise the working classes. And, in the second place, as regards the statement I made, it simply was this. The election was over—we were still Ministers; and still acting according to our sense of duty, recommended in the Royal Speech that the question of

Parliamentary Reform should be dealt with; because I must be allowed to remind the House that whatever may have been our errors, we never paltered with the Reform question—we proposed a Bill which we intended to carry. And having once taken up the question as a matter of duty, no doubt greatly influenced by what we considered the unhappy mistakes of our predecessors, and the difficult position in which they had placed the Crown, Parliament, and the country, we determined not to leave the question until it had been settled. As Ministers of the Crown we felt it to be our duty to recommend to Her Majesty to introduce the question of Reform in the Speech from the Throne which opened the Parliament of 1859. And how were we, except in that spirit of compromise which is the principal characteristic of our political system—how could we introduce a Reform Bill after that election, without in some degree considering the possibility of lowering the borough franchise? But it was not a franchise of 6*l.*, but an arrangement that was to be taken with the rest of the Bill, and if it had been met in the same spirit a measure might have been passed.

But, says the right hon. Baronet, pursuing his history of the Reform question 'when the Government of Lord Derby retired from office, we came in and we were perfectly sincere in our intentions to carry that Reform Bill to which we had pledged ourselves and by means of which we had driven the Government from office—but look at the opposition we received—there never was such opposition! There was the right hon. Gentleman,' meaning myself—'he absolutely allowed our Bill to be read a second time.' That tremendous reckless opposition of mine which allowed the Bill to be read a second time, seems to have laid the Government prostrate. If

I had succeeded in throwing out the Bill, we should have relieved the new Government from great embarrassment; but, their Bill having been read a second time, the Government were quite overcome, and it appears have never recovered the paralysis up to this time.

The right hon. Gentleman was good enough to say that the proposition of his Government was rather coldly received upon his side of the House, but he said 'nobody spoke against it.' Certainly, nobody spoke against the Bill on this side; but I think I remember some remarkable speeches from the right hon. Gentleman's friends against their measure. There was the great city of Edinburgh represented by an acute eloquence of which we never weary, and which again upon the present occasion, we have heard; there was the great city of Bristol, represented also by a devoted supporter of the Government, and many other constituencies of equal importance. But the most remarkable speech—the speech which 'killed Cock Robin,'—was absolutely delivered by one who might be described as a Member of the Government—the Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Massey), and who, I believe, spoke from immediately behind the Prime Minister. Did the Government express any disapprobation of such conduct? They promoted him to a great post, and sent him to India with an income of fabulous amount. And now they are astonished they cannot carry a Reform Bill! If they remove all those among their supporters who oppose such Bills by preferring them to posts of great confidence and great lucre, how can they suppose that they will ever carry one?

Looking at the policy of the Government, I am not at all astonished at the speech which the right hon.

Gentleman the Secretary of State has made this evening, of which speech I may observe, that although it was remarkable for many things, yet there were two salient conclusions at which the right hon. Gentleman arrived. First, the repudiation of the rights of man, and next, the repudiation of the 6*l.* franchise. The first is a great relief; and, remembering what the feeling of the House was only a year ago, when, by the dangerous eloquence of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, we were led to believe that the days of Tom Paine had returned, and that Rousseau was to be rivalled in a new social contract,* it must be a vast relief to every respectable man here to find that not only are we not to have the rights of man, but we are not even to have the 6*l.* franchise. It is a matter, I think, of much congratulation, and I am ready to give credit to the Secretary of State for the honesty with which he has expressed himself; I only wish we had had the same frankness, the same honesty of expression, arising from a clear view of his subject, in the first year of the Parliament as we have had in the last. I will follow the example of the right hon. Gentleman and his friends and be frank. I have not changed my opinion upon the subject of what is called Parliamentary Reform. All that has occurred—all that I have observed—all the results of my reflections lead me to this more and more—that the principle upon which the constituencies of this country should be increased is one not of radical, but, I would say, of lateral, reform—the extension of the franchise, not its degradation. Although —I do not wish in any way to deny it—being in the most difficult position when the Parliament of 1859 met, being anxious to assist the Crown and the Parlia-

* Alluding to Mr. Gladstone's speech on Mr. Baines' Borough Franchise Bill, 1864.

ment, by proposing some moderate measure which men on both sides might support, we did to a certain extent, agree to some modification of the 10*l.* franchise—yet I confess that my present opinion is opposed, as it originally was, to any course of the kind. I think that it would fail in its object; that it would not secure the introduction of that particular class which we all desire to introduce, but that it would introduce many others who are unworthy of the suffrage. But, Sir, I retain these opinions—I think it is possible to increase the electoral body of the country, if the opportunity were favourable, and the necessity urgent, by the introduction of voters upon principles in unison with the principles of the Constitution, so that the suffrage should remain a privilege, and not a right—a privilege to be gained by virtue, by intelligence, by industry, by integrity, and to be exercised for the common good. And I think if you quit that ground—if you once admit that every man has a right to vote whom you cannot prove to be disqualified for it, you would change the character of the Constitution, and you would change it in a manner which will tend to lower the importance of this country.

Between the scheme we brought forward and the measure now brought forward by the hon. Member for Leeds, and the inevitable conclusion which its principal supporters acknowledge it must lead to, it is a question between an aristocratic Government in the proper sense of the term—that is, a Government by the best men of all classes—and a democracy. I doubt very much whether a democracy is a Government that would suit this country; and it is just as well that the House when coming to a vote on this question should really consider if that be the issue—and it is the real

issue—between retaining the present Constitution—not the present constituent body, but between the present Constitution and a democracy—it is just as well for the House to recollect that the stake is not mean—that what is at issue is of some price. You must remember, not to use the epithet profanely, that we are dealing really with a peculiar people. There is no country at the present moment that exists under the circumstances and under the same conditions as the people of this realm. You have, for example, an ancient, powerful, richly-endowed Church and perfect religious liberty. You have unbroken order and complete freedom. You have landed estates as large as the Romans, combined with commercial enterprise such as Carthage and Venice united never equalled. And you must remember that this peculiar country, with these strong contrasts, is not governed by force; it is not governed by standing armies; it is governed by a most singular series of traditionary influences, which generation after generation cherishes and preserves because they know that they embalm custom and represent law. And, with this, what have you done? You have created the greatest Empire of modern time. You have amassed a capital of fabulous amount. You have devised and sustained a system of credit still more marvellous. And, above all, you have established and maintained a scheme so vast and complicated of labour and industry, that the history of the world offers no parallel to it. And all these mighty creations are out of all proportion to the essential and indigenous elements and resources of the country. If you destroy that state of society, remember this—England cannot begin again. There are countries which have been in great danger and gone through great suffering; the United States, for example,

whose fortunes are now so perilous, and who in our own immediate day have had great trials; you have had—perhaps even now in the United States of America you have—a protracted and fratricidal civil war which has lasted for four years; but if it lasted for four years more, vast as would be the disaster and desolation, when ended the United States might begin again, because the United States then would only be in the same condition that England was at the end of the War of the Roses, when probably she had not even 3,000,000 of population, with vast tracts of virgin soil and mineral treasures, not only undeveloped but undreamt of. Then you have France. France had a real revolution in this century—a real revolution, not merely a political but a social revolution. The institutions of the country were uprooted, the orders of society abolished—even the landmarks and local names removed and erased. But France could begin again. France had the greatest spread of the most exuberant soil in Europe, and a climate not less genial; she had, and always had, comparatively, a limited population, living in a most simple manner. France therefore, could begin again. But England—the England we know, the England we live in, the England of which we are proud—could not begin again. I do not mean to say that after great troubles England would become a howling wilderness, or doubt that the good sense of the people would, to some degree, prevail, and some fragments of the national character survive; but it would not be old England—the England of power and tradition, of credit and capital, that now exists. It is not in the nature of things; and, Sir, under these circumstances, I hope the House, when the question before us is one impeaching the character of our Constitution, will hesitate—that it will

sanction no step that has a tendency to democracy, but that they will maintain the ordered state of free England in which we live.

I do not think that in this country generally there is a desire at this moment for any further change in this matter. I think the general opinion of the country on the subject of Parliamentary Reform is that our views are not sufficiently matured on either side. Certainly, so far as I can judge, I cannot refuse the conclusion that such is the condition of hon. Gentlemen opposite. We all know the paper circulated among us before Parliament met, on which the speech of its author, the hon. Member for Maidstone (Mr. Buxton), this evening is a comment. I quite sympathise with his 'Liberal Dilemma;' it was one of the most interesting contributions to our elegiac literature I have heard for some time. But is it in this House only that we find these indications of the want of maturity in views upon this subject? Our tables are covered at this moment with propositions of eminent Members of the Liberal Party—men eminent for character or talent, and for both—and what are these propositions? All devices to counteract the consequences of their own Liberal Reform Bill, to which they are opposed; therefore, it is quite clear, when we read these propositions and speculations, that the mind and intellect of the party have arrived at no conclusions on the subject. I would not speak of these projects with disrespect. I am prepared to give them grave consideration; but I ask whether these publications are not proofs that the active intelligence of the Liberal party is itself entirely at sea on the subject? I may say, there has been more consistency, more calmness of consideration on this subject, on the part of Gentlemen on this side, than

on the part of those who seem to arrogate to themselves the monopoly of treating it. I can, at least, in answer to those who charge us with trifling with the subject, appealing to the recollection of every candid man, say that we treated it with sincerity—prepared our measure with care, and submitted it to the House, trusting to its candid consideration. We spared no pains in its preparation, and at this time I am bound to say, speaking for my Colleagues, in the main principles on which that Bill was founded—namely, the extension of the franchise not its degradation, will be found, we believe, the only solution that will ultimately be accepted by the country. Therefore I cannot say that I look to this question, or that those with whom I act look to it, with any embarrassment. We feel we have done our duty; and it is not without gratification that I have listened to the candid admissions of many hon. Gentlemen who voted against it, that they feel the defeat of that measure by the Liberal party was a great mistake. So far as we are concerned, I repeat, we, as a party, can look to Parliamentary Reform not as an embarrassing subject; but that is no reason why we should agree to the measure of the hon. Member for Leeds. It would reflect no credit on the House of Commons. It is a mean device, and I think the House will best do its duty to the country if they reject the measure by a decided majority.

APRIL 27, 1866.*

On the second reading of the Bill to amend the Representation of the People.

EARL GROSVENOR moved 'That this House, while ready to consider, with a view to its settlement, the question of Parliamentary Reform, is of opinion that it is inexpedient to discuss a Bill for the reduction of the Franchise in England and Wales, until the House has before it the entire scheme contemplated by the Government for the Amendment of the Representation of the People.'

On the eighth night of the debate LORD CRANBORNE, MR. BUTLER-JOHNSTONE, MR. GRANT, SIR MICHAEL HICKS-BEACH, MR. NEWDEGATE, and MR. W. E. DUNCOMBE, spoke in favour of the Amendment, and CAPTAIN GROSVENOR, THE O'DONOGHUE, MR. HIBBERT, MR. BAINES, MR. P. A. TAYLOR, and MR. LOCKE KING opposed it.

Mr. DISRAELI: Mr. Speaker, before I address myself to the Amendment of the noble Lord the Member for Chester, I would make one remark upon the reasons

* Parliament had been dissolved in July, 1865, Lord Palmerston being then Prime Minister. After his death in the following October, the Queen entrusted the conduct of affairs to Lord Russell, who formed his cabinet on a policy of Parliamentary Reform. Mr. Gladstone, who, retaining the office of Chancellor of the Exchequer, assumed, for the first time, that of Leader of the House of Commons, consequently introduced a Reform Bill early in the Session of 1866. At the close of the speech in which he brought forward the measure, he thus summed up its main provisions:—'The first is to create an occupation franchise in counties, for houses alone, or houses with land, beginning at 14*l.* rental, and reaching up to the present occupation franchise of 50*l.* The second is, to introduce into counties the provision, that copyholders and leaseholders within

put forth for the introduction of the Government measure. They are two-fold—Parliamentary pledges and Ministerial promises: the first must be fulfilled; the second have been violated. Now, Sir, the House should be cautious in accepting some views upon this head of the subject which have been advanced in the course of this debate. They are touching on very dangerous ground. Hitherto the freedom of Parliament has been the boast of our predecessors. But the freedom of Parliament did not mean merely freedom of discussion or freedom from arrest; it meant, above all other privileges, liberty of legislation. When we hear of Parliament being pledged, are we, then, to understand that the conduct of a preceding Parliament is to deprive us of the enjoyment of the highest and most exalted of our functions? Why, Sir, in this country great authorities upon this subject have been so jealous

Parliamentary boroughs shall be put upon the same footing as freeholders in Parliamentary boroughs now stand upon for the purpose of county voting, without any alteration in the relative amounts of qualification for household and copyhold as compared with freehold. The third is a savings-bank franchise, which will operate in both counties and towns, but which may, we think, have the more sensible operation in the counties.

In towns we propose, first, to place compound householders on the same footing as ratepaying householders. We propose next to abolish the tax and ratepaying clauses. We propose also to reduce 10*l.* clear annual value to 7*l.* clear annual value; and to bring in the gross estimated rental taken from the rate-book as the ordinary or presumptive measure of the value, thus, *pro tanto*, making the rate-book the register. We propose, further, to introduce a franchise on behalf of lodgers, which will comprehend both those persons holding part of a house with separate and independent access, and those who hold part of a house as inmates of the family of another person. The qualification for the suffrage in these classes will be the 10*l.* clear annual value of apartments, without reference to furniture.'

of any attempt upon the liberty of legislation enjoyed by Parliament that they have even maintained that with such a Constitution as that of England no such thing as a fundamental law can be recognised, and that such muniments must be sought for only in Imperial chanceries. I would not myself maintain such a proposition without great reserve; but I think we shall agree in this—that no Parliament can be bound by the acts of its predecessors, except so far as they take the forms of law; and such forms Parliament has the power to revise. No doubt the conduct of preceding Parliaments is for our example and instruction; and we should indeed be indifferent to the highest sources of political wisdom, in a country so practical in its politics as England, if we disregarded the precedents furnished by those who have gone before us in this House. But, Sir, I hold it cannot for a moment be maintained that we can be at all estopped in our course by any result which a vote of a single House of Parliament—for that is all that is alleged—can effect. Our course is free.

Then let us look to the plea that is founded on the conduct of public men. It may be possible that a statesman may have entered into rash engagements upon a subject of vital importance; but I think no one will for a moment maintain that Parliament is bound to pursue a course of which they disapprove, because a Minister has entered into engagements which are precipitate. Such conduct on the part of a public man may be a very good reason for his leaving the public service or retiring from public life, but it never can be a ground for his appealing to the country to support him, for the sake of his honour and consistency, in a course which Parliament may deem to be

unwise and inexpedient. I think there is only one ground on which he can rely for the support of Parliament, and that is that he has a policy which they believe is wise and expedient, and that he submits to their consideration a measure proposing means adequate to accomplish the object in view.

But, Sir, I will take the question out of the region of abstraction, in which, for convenience of argument, I have for a moment considered it. Is this Parliament pledged to deal with the subject of Parliamentary Reform? If ever there were a Parliament less pledged than any other to deal with the subject, it must be the present Parliament. It has been announced to us—or I would not have alluded to the fact—that before the dissolution of the late Parliament a Cabinet Council was held to consider the subject and to decide upon the course which the Ministry should pursue. We know that the chief organ of the Government in this House (Sir George Grey), in the absence of the Prime Minister, informed us what the decision was at which the Cabinet had arrived on this subject. He told us that they had come to the conclusion that they would not go to the country on the question of Reform or in any way pledge themselves on that matter. We know that, under these circumstances, the Chief Minister issued an address to his constituents—which in this country is looked upon as the programme or manifesto of a political party—immediately afterwards, and that in that address even the word 'Reform' did not appear. We know also that when the new Parliament assembled, the Government, with great discretion, did not in the Address from the Crown call upon us for any expression of opinion on the question. Papers were promised, and it was announced that when those

papers were produced the views of the Government would be laid before us. So far, therefore, as the present Parliament is concerned, every hon. Member will, I think, concur with me in saying that on both sides of the House we were perfectly free to act upon this subject in accordance with those convictions which should guide us to take whatever course we deemed to be best for the country.

Let us now see whether existing statesmen have broken their promises in reference to this question. The charge of having done so is a serious one, and it was made by a high authority, the noble Lord the Secretary for War (the Marquess of Hartington), who represents, as he informed us on one memorable occasion, just after he had entered public life, 'the educated section of the Liberal party.' He ought, therefore, to be cautious in speaking of broken promises in the case of persons among whom figures chiefly his own leader. But it becomes my duty to vindicate on this occasion, as I have done before, the conduct of Lord John Russell, and that I am prepared to do. Lord John Russell thought fit in 1852, for reasons to which the hon. Gentleman opposite has just referred, and to which I shall advert in due time, to introduce a Reform Bill. That Bill was in itself a very good one; it is indeed probable that a long time will elapse before we again see so good a measure. It had only one fault, and that was that nobody wanted it. Years elapsed, but Lord John Russell did not relinquish his policy. In 1859 he had an opportunity of asserting that policy, and, having induced his party to support him, succeeded in effecting a change in the Government. He then became a leading Member of a Ministry which was pledged to introduce a Reform Bill. Did he break that pledge? No. He

brought in a Reform Bill, and does any one, I would ask, doubt the sincerity of Lord John Russell with respect to that measure throughout? I need not allude to the emotion which he evinced when he withdrew the Bill. I saw in that emotion nothing to provoke the derision with which his conduct was spoken of by those who professed most to sympathise with him. But what I want to know is, where are those violated promises to be found? Lord John Russell felt some emotion when he withdrew his Bill—that is on record; but the circumstances led to the withdrawal of something more important than the Bill, for it clearly led to the withdrawal of Lord John Russell from this House. He therefore fulfilled his promises, and fulfilled them at a great sacrifice. So far as he was concerned, then, the charge of broken pledges on the part of public men in connection with this question has no foundation. Lord John Russell may, I think, be looked upon as a fair representative of the Whig party, and I may take it for granted that they, too, were not justly open to this charge. No pledge, therefore, has been broken by them. Lord John Russell left this House; and the only time when he afterwards expressed an opinion on the subject of Reform was when he recommended to the country a state of tranquil contentment. This Parliament, then, and the Whig party as represented by Lord Russell, have broken no vows on the subject.

How, then, stands the case with respect to another statesman, who represents the Conservative party? Lord Derby was sent for by the Queen in 1858. There was in this House a majority against the friends of Lord Derby of more than 140; and under these circumstances Lord Derby thought it his duty to decline the honour which Her Majesty was pleased to offer him.

But he gave a reason to Her Majesty, and that was, not only that he was in a great minority in the House of Commons, but that such was the position of the Parliamentary Reform question that he felt conscious that the minute he took office that question would be brought forward and he would be put in a minority. The House is aware that, after deliberation, Her Majesty felt it her duty again to appeal to Lord Derby, and if the majority against him in the House of Commons had been 240, instead of 140, it would have been impossible for Lord Derby to refuse to obey Her Majesty's wishes. But that happened which he had anticipated. I do not think that we had been six weeks in office before the question of Reform was brought forward by the hon. Member for East Surrey (Mr. Locke King) and we were placed in a minority. What was the course to pursue under these circumstances? It was quite impossible for Lord Derby to retire from office. The discord in the Liberal party which caused the break up of their Government still prevailed. It was absolutely necessary, therefore, for Lord Derby to consider his position. He did consider it. He felt it his duty to deal with the question of Parliamentary Reform. He introduced a Bill on the subject, and he staked his administration on its fate. The measure was defeated, the Government ultimately resigned, but Lord Derby fulfilled his pledge, and at a sacrifice which proved his sincerity.

I now come to the real reason why Lord Russell in 1852 and Lord Derby in 1859 brought forward Reform Bills; and in reference to this matter an accurate recollection of facts is most necessary. If there was any subject of which a man was a master, Lord Russell was master of Parliamentary Reform. It was to him what

currency was to Sir Robert Peel. No man knows its points more completely, or is more fully acquainted with all the bearings of the case, than the noble Lord. Lord Russell and Lord Derby are the only two existing statesmen who were concerned in passing the great Reform Bill of 1832, and it is well known that to their youthful energies the success of that measure was greatly, if not entirely, to be attributed. Therefore, neither of them could view the subject with any of that besotted prejudice which is imputed so frequently to both of those statesmen by differing sections of politicians. Lord Russell was naturally satisfied with the settlement of 1832, and he resisted all attempts, year after year, for general and comprehensive changes in our representative system; on the principle of finality he always successfully resisted them. But, having resisted them successfully, a new school of Reformers arose—piecemeal Reformers, or bit-by-bit Reformers—not an elegant, but a Parliamentary expression. These met with a different success. Persons called moderate—generally men who do not take the trouble of thinking for themselves—took it into their head that bit-by-bit Reform was a harmless thing; that it could not do much harm, and might give a little satisfaction. But Lord Russell, knowing that the distribution of power is the real point, and that the interests of England depend on the whole question always being considered, and that if you deal with a single franchise for example, which moderate men might consider an affair of no great importance, and did not deal with other parts of the question, you might effect a complete change in the British Constitution, felt in 1852, when pressed by piecemeal Reformers, that the only way to prevent them from proceeding was to devise a large and general

measure of Reform, by which he might baffle their endeavours. You know the result. He went out of office. Lord Derby, too, was beaten by the piecemeal Reformers, and therefore he was obliged to resign, or to submit the question himself to Parliament, and so baffle the efforts of the piecemeal Reformers. Both Lord Russell and Lord Derby were influenced by the same cause, and had the same object. But the most singular thing is—and to this I call the attention of the House—Lord Russell is again Minister, and we have him now introducing a measure of piecemeal Reform!

Well, Sir, I have shown that Parliament has not been pledged on this subject, and I think I have shown that there have been no broken vows of the great parties in the State, as represented by their chief men, Lord Russell and Lord Derby. What, then, is the origin of this 7*l.* Franchise Bill? The origin of it is this—that some eighteen or nineteen months ago the Chancellor of the Exchequer came down to the House one fine summer morning appropriated to one of those dreary debates on the 6*l.* franchise to which we all look back with a feeling of horror—made a most remarkable speech, in which he established the franchise on the rights of man; and at the same time announced his conviction that the working classes of the country, on whom he delivered a high panegyric, possessed no share, or only an infinitesimal share, of that franchise; the inevitable consequence being that a large measure should be brought forward, as an approximation to the rights of man, to confer the suffrage on the working classes. That speech was received with enthusiasm by a party in this House—not a numerous party, but represented by great talent—in one individual by commanding talent—while among his followers are men of activity,

intelligence, and experience in organisation. They have also a party in the country, not a contemptible party, though I think not a predominant party; and from that moment this party has been at work—working on the declaration of the Chancellor of the Exchequer; checked for a moment by the prudence of Lord Palmerston; but the moment he left us, instantly a new character was given to the Administration, and the consequence has been the measure we have now before us—a measure of piecemeal Reform; and I oppose it at once as a measure of piecemeal Reform, and support the Amendment of the noble Lord to which I am now going almost strictly to confine myself.

Sir, my great objection to the measure of the Government is this—that though others may, I cannot really understand it—I cannot calculate its consequences—I cannot fathom what may be the result of its provisions, unless I have those further measures upon the subject which are promised by the Chancellor of the Exchequer. But if I do consider the measure without reference to those further measures, I think I can show to the House that it must land us in a condition of such confusion, I believe little contemplated by the great body of the Ministers and of those who support them on this occasion, that I verily declare—and I will give the proofs why I have arrived at that conclusion—if this Bill pass—and it should be the duty of Ministers to advise Her Majesty to recur to the sense of her people—I do verily believe they would have to hold an autumn Session in order to revise and modify this Bill before really they could dissolve Parliament. I propose to show, in the first instance, the inconsistency, the inconvenience, the immense injury that may be produced by this Bill if it passes alone, and in

the sense in which it is given us as a complete measure—for it was introduced as a complete measure, and as such we are asked to-night to give our assent to its principle. I do not think I can put it in a more convenient manner than by referring to the county franchise. I never have been a stickler for a contracted or exclusive county franchise. My opinions on the subject were taken from my earliest political friend, who preceded me in the representation of the county, and who was the author of the Chandos clause. I am satisfied that the principle of that clause was a right principle. It was supported by Mr. Hume and the leaders of the Liberal party. It was opposed by Lord Althorp upon what I cannot but conceive in the days in which we live an old-fashioned notion—namely, that you should confine your suffrage in counties entirely to the proprietor, and the suffrage in boroughs entirely to the occupier. But at a time when, in 1832, you were ostentatiously and avowedly, and very properly, giving a large share in the government of the country to the middle classes, it was most monstrous and inconsistent that the most important section of the middle classes—I say most important because the largest employers of labour,—the farmers of England, should have no share in the suffrage. Therefore, I think the measure proposed by Lord Chandos was a wise and proper measure.

The Bill now before us proposes a very considerable reduction of the occupation franchise in counties. Now I want to show the House how that will act if this Bill which is brought in as an incomplete Bill is passed. And I would do that first, by showing the effect upon the proposed franchise in counties of the population of the Parliamentary boroughs. The House, perhaps, has

not realised, as it ought to do, the increase in the population of the Parliamentary boroughs since the Act of 1832. It is very large. It is larger than the population of several European kingdoms. The increase of population in the Parliamentary boroughs is considerably over 4,000,000, and the greater part of it is located without the boundaries of those boroughs. I know it may be said that a considerable proportion of this increase is supplied by the metropolitan districts. I think it is likely that the greater part of the increase in the metropolitan districts may be comprised within the Parliamentary boroughs; although I have no doubt that the increase of the population in the metropolitan boroughs has materially affected the contiguous counties of Essex, Surrey, and Kent. But I think it will lead to more precise results if we deduct the population in the metropolitan districts; and then there will be an increase of upwards of 3,000,000 in the population of the Parliamentary boroughs, much the greater part of which is located without the boundaries. I do not know that I could give a happier instance of this than the borough from which I presented a petition to-day—the borough which the Chancellor of the Exchequer referred to in his opening speech as a conclusive proof of the unsatisfactory position occupied by the working class in respect to the suffrage—the borough which was made the subject of comment in the admirable speech of my right hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire (Sir E. Bulwer Lytton), and which also was made by the hon. Member for Birmingham, the other night, the main ground upon which he urged the necessity of this Bill—I mean Rochdale. I admit that when you recall the general character of the artizans of Rochdale—a most flourishing part of the country—when you recall

the high reputation they enjoy for some of the greatest virtues which men in their position can exhibit, and when you observe the nominal share of votes which they appear from the papers before us to possess in the constituency of their own borough, the case is very striking. But, Sir, when I come to examine the question, I find that the population of Rochdale without the Parliamentary borough is larger than the population within the boundary. The boundary of the borough of Rochdale happens to be peculiarly limited. There is only a radius of three-quarters of a mile from a central point, and beyond that radius the population spreads over seven valleys in a remarkable manner. It considerably exceeds the population of the town, and the great body of the workmen live in that part of Rochdale which is beyond the Parliamentary boundary. I observe that the mills belonging to the family of the hon. Member for Birmingham, and among the most distinguished establishments of that kind in the country, are all without the Parliamentary borough. They employ at this moment about 1,000 hands; and I believe those hands, almost without exception, live outside the boundary. [Mr. BRIGHT: No; the great bulk of them live within the borough.] Well, I have the names of most of them before me. But I will not now pursue this point with reference to the borough franchise, because that is of little importance to my present argument; but with reference to the county franchise it is a matter of much importance. Here is a population of 40,000, 50,000, or even 60,000 without the boundary of the borough of Rochdale; and this is the population which is to produce the county voters under this Bill. Remember that they will have only to live in 6*l.* houses. If a man has a 6*l.* house there—and a 14*l.* house is, I

believe, not a rare thing in that part of the world—but if he has a 6*l.* house, with an accommodation field of 8*l.* annual value, he may be a county voter. No one would object to such persons having the suffrage; but is it not proper and just that they should vote where their capital exists and their industry is exercised? In the community of which they are members, and to which they are bound by every political and social tie? Ought they not to be electors of Rochdale, and ought they to be electors for Yorkshire or Lancashire? That is the question, and I put it to every candid man whether this is a state of things that ought to be allowed to exist? I believe the hon. Member for Birmingham was once Member for Rochdale—[Mr. BRIGHT: No!]; at all events he may be, or some of his friends—and I put it to him what he would say if, at three o'clock, when he was not much a-head on the poll, and was a little anxious, a stalwart body of Yorkshire or Lancashire farmers were to ride into the town, and, on the faith of some old-fashioned franchise, should give their votes in Rochdale borough, instead of voting for the county. Why, we should soon hear, I am sure, from the hon. Member, a new argument for Parliamentary Reform, to put an end to such injustice.

Well, now, all the boroughs of the North, as a general rule, are in this condition; the boroughs of the two Lancashires, the boroughs of the West Riding, the boroughs of the county of Durham, the boroughs of Cheshire, are all in the same condition. It is not easy to get precise information upon this subject before the House, because we have no authentic Returns—but then that is the very thing of which I complain; but we have it every now and then in our power to illustrate the case. Now, I will take the case

of the town of Halifax. The population within the Parliamentary borough of Halifax is 38,000; but there is, fortunately, a more recent political creation than the Parliamentary borough—there is the municipal borough—and we have a Return of the boundary of the municipal borough of Halifax, and of the population contained in it. The population within the Parliamentary boundary is, as I have said, 38,000; but the population within the municipal boundary is 60,000. It is this difference of 22,000 which is to feed the county constituency; and I want to know, is that a state of affairs which is to be tolerated when you have before you a scheme of Parliamentary Reform, which certainly a fortnight ago was not a complete and conclusive one?

But, Sir, this is not peculiar to the North. I will take the borough which the hon. Gentleman certainly represents, the borough of Birmingham; and what is the state of affairs there? Why, much more monstrous even than in Rochdale, and most of the northern towns. The population beyond the Parliamentary boundary in Birmingham—and, mind you, when I say beyond the boundary, you would not, if you were walking about the streets, see the line of demarcation with respect to that boundary; it is like London and Westminster, a homogeneous community, having the same feelings and the same interests—the population beyond the Parliamentary boundary is immense. In the suburb of Aston alone, according to a statement which I have here from a person whose word cannot be questioned, and who has every opportunity of knowing the facts—in the suburb of Aston alone there are 2,000 persons who could qualify under a 10*l.* franchise, but who do not vote for the borough of Birmingham, which they ought to vote for; but 1,400 of these will, he says, imme-

diately qualify under this Bill, if it passes, as county voters.

Now, I ask again, is this a state of affairs which ought to be permitted? If you pass this Bill with all these anomalies left unremedied, what, I ask, will be the condition of the county constituencies? I take it for granted—there may be individuals in this House who think otherwise, but I will not dwell upon such eccentric opinions—I take it for granted that the great body of the Members of the House of Commons wish to maintain the legitimate influence of the landed interest of England, as being one of the best securities, certainly, for public liberty, and the only security for our local government. I take it for granted, I say, that is the feeling of both sides of the House. Why, then, should you make these great changes, and make them in this imperfect manner, instead of having before you, as this Amendment asks you to have, a complete scheme?

Well, Sir, I know it will be said by the right hon. Gentleman the President of the Board of Trade, while he admits this condition of affairs and that it ought to be remedied, that Lord Derby did not bring forward a Boundaries Bill. Well, now, in the first place, that is not an argument; it is only a captious remark. If there be a great evil, and if I have shown that there is a great evil, it is not the slightest argument on the part of the right hon. Gentleman to say that Lord Derby, when placed in a similar position, did not remedy it. If, indeed, the Cabinet take Lord Derby as their model, if they avow that their Government is established on the principle of imitating Lord Derby, then there would be something in the remark of the right hon. Gentleman. But that is not the case, and

therefore, I say that it is no argument whatever. But is it true, on the other hand, that Lord Derby neglected this question? Is it not true that Lord Derby, when I, on his part, introduced into this House a former Reform Bill, wished that the very day the Bill passed there should have been a compulsory revision of all the boundaries of Parliamentary boroughs? Was not that plan of Reform combined with an arrangement which would have rendered such a revision morally certain to have taken place immediately?

The great difficulty of passing a Boundary Bill was this:—Hon. Members recollect, or have heard, that when the Reform Bill of 1832 passed the question of settling the boundaries of the Parliamentary boroughs was the source of contention, of misrepresentation, of imputations of injustice and corruption. At that time the boundary Commissioners were appointed by Government; but Lord Derby by his Bill, profiting by experience, took the power of appointment from the Government and placed it in the hands of the Inclosure Commissioners. The late Mr. Ellice, who was a great partisan, and greatly admired our Bill though he voted against it, said that that portion of Lord Derby's Bill was perfect—that we had solved a great difficulty, for he defied any one to make a party question out of decisions of the Inclosure Commissioners—in fact, the plan met with general approval. But now nothing is done—nothing is even promised to be done—upon this subject. I ask the House to consider the effect which this immense population spread around the Parliamentary boroughs will have upon the county constituencies if some measure to regulate the borough boundaries is not brought in by the Ministry? What will be the effect if those who

will be enfranchised by the Bill are admitted to the county constituencies having no sympathy with the county constituencies whatever? I do not pretend that there is any political principle in the figure 50*l.* in the counties any more than there is in the figure 10*l.* in the boroughs. The only advantage I see in those figures is that some degree of prescription has gathered round them. And as it has been determined to disturb the settlement of 1832, I am quite prepared to consider the revision of the county franchise. But I say there is a principle in the county franchise when you deal with it, and it is this—the franchise must be a county franchise. It must be a suffrage exercised by those who have a natural relation to the chief property and to the chief industry of the county. Those who are to exercise it ought to be members of the same community, and not strangers whose thoughts, feelings, interests, capital, and labour are employed and occupied in another place. That is the principle I contend for.

Now, having shown what will be the effect upon county constituencies of admitting the thousands—rather the tens of thousands—who are to be enfranchised by this Bill into those constituencies, I will ask the House for a moment to consider what will be the effect upon the county constituencies of the admission into them of the population of those boroughs which are not Parliamentary boroughs. This is the next step in considering the effect of this Bill upon the county constituencies. The House knows very well that in almost every county in England there are towns whose population exceeds 5,000 which are not represented. Many of these are rural towns, and have a keen interest in the property and industry of the counties in which they are situate; and the admission of the population

of these towns into the county constituencies would not make much difference, as they would have a community of interest and of feeling with the counties, and would doubtless vote for those men who would best represent the interests of the county. But in cases where large towns have sprung into sudden population in consequence of some particular and distinctive industry, what would be the effect of permitting the population of such towns suddenly to exercise the franchise of the county, in which they have only a limited interest? Why, such a change must of necessity lead to great inconvenience and injustice, and must sensibly operate in reducing the legitimate power—for we ask no more —of the landed interest. In the bill of 1859, referred to by the hon. Member for Birmingham the other night, there was an allotment of seats of which he spoke with some contempt, although he was obliged to admit that it was of such a character that there was not a single unrepresented town of 20,000 inhabitants, and scarcely one of 15,000, not provided for, and that the effect of admitting the population of the unrepresented towns into the county franchise was proportionately relieved. As to the effect of the unrepresented towns by the reduction of the franchise on the county constituencies the answer of Government now, no doubt, will be, 'Wait until you see our Bill for the Re-distribution of Seats.' My first and principal reply to that would be, 'If we consent to the second reading of this Bill to-night, what security have we that the subsequent measures which the Amendment calls for, and which we all know to be absolutely necessary for the proper understanding of this Bill, will be passed?' No speech that we have heard has met that argument. Even the new device, the *pari passu* device, which we have

heard of to-night, does not in the slightest degree meet it, because by one step you may pass this measure, and by another step you may throw out the other. You may pass the Franchise Bill on Monday, and on Thursday the Seats Bill may be thrown out.

But I will not insist upon this primary objection, because it has been treated so amply; but it was necessary to my argument that I should refer to it. But there are other considerations which appear to me to be worthy of the grave attention of the House. The Government say, 'We are going to produce a Seats Bill which will meet all these objections with reference to the population of the unrepresented towns by giving them Members.' But what are you going to do for the counties? When you pursue that subject you will find that if you proceed with this Bill without having the scheme of the Government with regard to the distribution of seats before you it will be impossible for you, as I will prove, to come to any sensible and satisfactory decision of the amount of what your county franchise should be. It is absolutely necessary that the House should carry in their mind—I have no doubt they have it—the comparative claim to representation of the counties and the boroughs. I am sure the House will recollect it. It is in round numbers 9,350,000, the population of the boroughs, against 11,400,000, the population of the counties; 514,000 electors in the boroughs, against 501,000 electors of counties; and 33,000,000*l.* of rateable property in boroughs, against 60,000,000*l.* in counties. But the house must bear in mind—I will put it before them very briefly—the most pertinent and pregnant calculation which I think on a subject of this kind ever was made. I propose that the House should for a moment consider this proposition—

to transfer to counties the representation of all boroughs with less than 500 electors. Let us see what that is. There are 87 seats, and see what the result would be. Transfer to counties all boroughs with less than 500 electors, being 87 seats. It would be necessary, of course, to deduct their population from the boroughs and add it to the counties. The population of boroughs would then be a little under 9,000,000 and the population of counties a little under 12,000,000. The electors of the boroughs would be 492,000 against 523,000 electors of the counties. The rateable value of the boroughs would be about 34,000,000*l.*, and the rateable value of the counties would be 59,500,000*l.* None of these great quantities would be therefore much affected; but, instead of the boroughs having 334 Members and the counties 162 Members, the boroughs would have 247 Members, and the counties 249. It is necessary that the House should bear in mind this striking and singular illustration of inequality in the relative representation of counties and boroughs.

Well, then, under these circumstances, I address to the Government these questions; What are you going to do for the counties? You are going to increase the representation of the boroughs, and are going, we will say, to transfer the representation of some of the small boroughs to larger boroughs, and thus so far to relieve the county constituencies from the possible danger of being to a great extent absorbed by the population of these towns; but at the same time what are you going to do for the counties? Are you, in the first instance, going to add some Members to the counties as well as to the large towns? Or are you going to add a great many Members to counties and some to large towns? On what principle are you going

to act? Are you going to establish plurality of representation while you shrink from granting plurality of voting to the constituent body? Are members to come here to represent numbers and not opinions? I ask these questions because upon your determination respecting them our decision with reference to the amount of the county franchise entirely depends. Or have you found, as others have found before you, and as I have no doubt Lord Russell, in the course of his numerous studies and experiments, has discovered, that this would be a plan extremely inconvenient, if not impossible? It would not faithfully represent the country. Would you, therefore, have recourse to a system of further division of counties, and, perhaps, of the great boroughs and cities? We want your decision on these points, because upon your determination depends the judgment we can arrive at as to the amount of the county franchise.

I will give you an instance in point—that of the county of Middlesex. The inhabitants of one portion of Middlesex are strictly rural, and the remaining portion are composed of a flourishing suburban residency. The county is not large, but is very populous, of great wealth, and possesses a very large constituency. If you give Middlesex four Members, the 14*l.* franchise will return to this House four suburban representatives. If, however, you divide the county, and give two to the rural and two to the suburban districts, the 14*l.* franchise may give two capital rural and two excellent suburban representatives. I therefore maintain that until we have the whole scheme before us it is absolutely impossible for us to arrive at any conclusion as to the amount of the county franchise.

What, therefore, can be more rational than the Amendment proposed by the noble Lord? There have been rumours and even Ministerial statements concerning further measures—let us then have them all, for while we are without them we cannot arrive at any decision upon the subject. I cannot conceive what answer can be urged against the claim which I now make, speaking strictly to the Amendment of the noble Lord. We have a right to ask the Government, generally speaking, what is the plan on which they mean to proceed with regard to the distribution of seats? At present, not a word has yet been said on the subject by the Government; but those who have avowedly a very great influence with the Government have made speeches and written on the subject, and if we are to take those speeches as intimations of what the Government intends to do, to my mind the course they are going to pursue is most unjust and injurious to the landed interest—that is to say, to England, because the legitimate interest of the land is the interest of England. Nothing can be more simple than the distribution of seats, according to the last statement with which we have been favoured. I have always regarded the distribution of seats as one of the deepest and most difficult subjects with which a statesman can have to deal. The general principles which he accepts for his guidance must be applied with great forbearance, with much regard to the various circumstances, and, as every man who has had anything to do with the subject knows, with as much temper as knowledge of the complicated interests. But these do not appear to be the opinions of those who would seem to exercise a directing influence in the decision of the Government upon this question. The last scheme to

which I listened was propounded a few weeks ago before the commencement of the debate. That scheme is the simplest in the world. In the North of England we will say there is a flourishing borough containing 100,000 or 200,000 inhabitants, and doing what is called a roaring trade. Well, it sends two Members to this House. On the other hand, there is a borough in the South of England with a small population—say of 5,000—of no great importance, merely a country market, which also sends two Members to Parliament. Now, can anything be more anomalous than that this great borough in the North, with its large population, teeming and increasing, should be represented in the House of Commons by only two Members, while this unknown place, which nobody has ever seen, should be represented by an equal number? It is indefensible, it is unjustifiable, and, if I were in the music-hall of Birmingham, and contrasted these two boroughs, it would not be difficult for me to produce a great effect. Nothing so easy as to disfranchise such a borough in the South of England. Yes; but the moment you do so a new issue arises. The issue is no longer between the borough in the North and the borough in the South, but between the borough in the North and the district in the South, exceeding, perhaps, the northern borough both in population and property, and which is yet but very imperfectly and inadequately represented. Well, let me take another example—for examples are always better than arguments. I will take West Kent, the population of which at this moment is about 500,000. It has several flourishing boroughs and towns with an aggregate population which exceeds 100,000. They are represented by eight Members, and the county of Kent by only two—capital Mem-

bers, I admit; we have none better, but still only two. Well, a borough in the South of England is to be disfranchised, and its Members are to be given to a borough in the North, because it has a large population. But West Kent is a very wealthy, progressive, and proud county, and will naturally say, 'If we are to have a southern borough disfranchised, give more representatives to the county of Kent.'

Therefore, Sir, it is not such a simple issue, this distribution of seats, as those who are in favour of these sweeping changes allege; and I think the case I have put is perfectly unanswerable—it is not to be answered, at all events, by a statement which I read by a Member of this House at a public meeting the other day to this effect, that the superiority of the property and population of the North would no longer admit the system which now prevails. Now, I think it most unwise to have these constant comparisons between the North and the South. It is as bad as the Americans, and, if pursued, may lead, as Mr. Canning said, to the revival of the Heptarchy. I do not want to make such comparisons; but this I will say, whatever you do with your representation, if you be wise statesmen, you will take care that the representation on the whole shall be distributed over the country. But, notwithstanding all the statements that are made—notwithstanding this rantipole rhetoric—it is not true that the North of England is superior in population or property to the South. Take the traditionary and acknowledged boundary line, the River Trent, and you will find that the population and property of the South are equal—nay, superior to the population and property of the North. And therefore those statements have nothing to do with the real

issue; they do not touch it. I know the answer to that. The answer is that, fortunately for the South, the metropolis is there. [Mr. BRIGHT: Hear, hear!] The hon. Gentleman says 'hear, hear;' well, but is there any reason why the intelligence, the population, and the property of the metropolis should not prefer a claim before these new boroughs? Are they to be neglected? Suppose I was to say to the hon. Member for Birmingham, who cheers me—'You are always boasting of the great preponderance of population, property, and industry in the North of England; but if you take away the West Riding and South Lancashire, you would not count for much.' What would the hon. Gentleman say to that? He would not agree to that. [Mr. BRIGHT: Hear, hear!] You admit, therefore that the North is not superior to the South, and therefore that system of disfranchising boroughs in the South in order to enfranchise great towns in the North cannot stand for a moment. The problem is a difficult one, and must be approached with much calmer and more philosophic views.

Now, I have not the slightest doubt to what all these fine measures would lead. I have never believed that they would end in the destruction of the country. I have too much confidence in the country for that. I think there are sense and creative spirit enough in this country to form a Government. But what I think is that they will end in the destruction of Parliament. You may get rid of the House of Commons—I hope you will not destroy England. Now, suppose the present Government make up their minds—as for aught I know they have made up their minds to do—to meet the question on a great scale, and astonish the House with a great scheme founded on their own statistics.

Suppose they say, 'We are prepared to disfranchise eighty-seven boroughs which have not 500 electors. We cannot give them entirely to the land; it is not practicable. But we will endeavour to approach a fair balance in the Constitution, and will as far as possible represent population and property blended, and at the same time we will every now and then allot for representation some distinctive interest.' Suppose they do that, what would be the consequence? If the House will permit me, I will tell them.

This will probably occur first. I do not suppose you would have, as some think, a Parliament which would not have the confidence of the country. If you had electoral districts to-morrow you would have a very great Parliament, for the character of individuals and the representation of great interests command public respect in England. You would have every great landowner in this House, every great manufacturer, and some merchants. But in a short time you would find that you did not have that hold over the Executive which you had under the old system. The want of diversity of elements in this House would cause that. In proportion as your command over the Executive fades, your great proprietors and your great manufacturers will cease to care to belong to the House of which the influence and importance proportionately diminish. Then the story will be that the House of Commons is not what it was. So you will extend the franchise again, and you may go to manhood or universal suffrage, but you will not advance your case. You will have a Parliament then that will entirely lose its command over the Executive, and so it will meet with less consideration and possess less influence; because the moment you have universal suffrage it always happens that the man who

elects despises the elected. He says, 'I am as good as he is, and although I sent him to Parliament, I have not a better opinion of him than I have of myself.' Then, when the House of Commons is entirely without command over the Executive, it will fall into the case of those Continental popular assemblies which we have seen rise up and disappear in our own days. There will be no charm of tradition; no prescriptive spell; no families of historic lineage; none of those great estates round which men rally when liberty is assailed; no statesmanship, no eloquence, no learning, no genius. Instead of these, you will have a horde of selfish and obscure mediocrities, incapable of anything but mischief, and that mischief devised and regulated by the raging demagogue of the hour!

Well, Sir, I think I have shown there is some reason in viewing the county franchise under the two heads—firstly, the influence, if we agree to this reduction, of the population in the Parliamentary boroughs, and secondly, the influence upon it of the population of the non-Parliamentary boroughs; and I think I have shown to the House that it is quite impossible for us to form any opinion as to the expediency of any change proposed, and of the appropriateness of the sum fixed for the amount of the county franchise, unless we have before us further information. And what is the Amendment of the noble Lord but a request for that further information? What surprises me most is that the Amendment should have been resisted—or, I may say, that it should have been permitted to exist. Why should it not have been anticipated? I cannot understand, when such expressions of opinion were given in this House on the introduction of the Bill, why the Government should not have felt it had taken a false step. It is unfair to

say that the Opposition was the cause of the Government taking this limited move. That is not only unfair and ungenerous, but I may say it is not a well-founded charge, because it is upon record that the measure of Lord Russell in 1860, although we disapproved many of its provisions, was permitted to be read a second time. That was so because it was a complete measure, and therefore the Opposition are not open to the charge; and I never can understand why the Chancellor of the Exchequer should have taken the view which he has of this case, and that he should have repeated with so much bitterness the Amendment of the noble Lord. It appears to me to be a rational Amendment, and not only that, but an Amendment expressed in language so clear, so simple, and so explicit that it cannot be misunderstood. I know that there is nothing so difficult as to draw up an Amendment; Lord Russell, in his time, was looked upon as a man who could devise as cunning an Amendment as any man in Parliament, and if the Amendment of the noble Lord, instead of being, as I really believe it to be, the reflex of his own candid mind, were the cunning device that some have pretended that it was, I can imagine Lord Russell, when it was brought to him, even though feeling that it might lead to awkward results, still entertaining something of the sympathy of a master hand and some of the envy of rival ability.

But what is the Motion that would have suited the Chancellor of the Exchequer? The House is not satisfied with the course he has taken; and even if the noble Lord the Member for Chester had not come forward to oppose this Bill, somebody on these benches must have done so; for while we were perfectly willing to consider a complete measure of Reform, and have

shown our readiness to do so, we must still have opposed this measure for the reasons I have stated in connection with the county franchise, and which I could on many other points pursue. Assuming, therefore, opposition on our part to have been inevitable, what is the Motion that would have satisfied the Chancellor of the Exchequer?

The other day I was looking over the records of a celebrated Assembly—I will not say as celebrated as the House of Commons, though unquestionably men as illustrious as any that ever figured in the House of Commons belonged to it—and the period was one similar to the present. The time was when the great Reform Bill was introduced in 1831. The country then was greatly agitated. On the 16th of May, 1831, at Wyatt's Rooms—I am sure hon. Gentlemen opposite will remember Wyatt's Rooms and the Oxford Union—the Parliamentary Reform Bill was before the Union, and an ardent Member, Mr. Knatchbull, moved the following Resolution with regard to it:—'That the present Ministry is incompetent to carry on the Government of the country.' It was supported—one remembers it almost with a sigh—by Mr. Sidney Herbert, and the debate was adjourned. But there was a Member of the Union who was not satisfied with the bald expression of opinion by Mr. Knatchbull, and who next day moved a rider to the Resolution, and that rider was in these terms—

That the Ministry has unwisely introduced and most unscrupulously forwarded a measure which threatens not only to change the form of our Government, but ultimately to break up the very foundations of social order, as well as materially to forward the views of those who press these projects throughout the civilised world.

I shall be perfectly willing to take that Amendment instead of the one now moved by the noble Lord. The Amendment as I have read it was moved by Mr. William Gladstone of Christ Church. ['Oh, oh!'] The utterances of hon. Members prove what I say—how difficult it is to devise an Amendment that will please everybody. But that Amendment, as I have said, I should certainly be prepared to adopt, for I think the Ministry have 'unwisely introduced, and unscrupulously forwarded' this measure.

Sir, I wish to confine myself strictly to the Amendment, and not to enter into a discussion of the Bill; but there is one point that I cannot pass over—the clause referring to leaseholds. That alone would prevent our assenting to this Bill; and I cannot help thinking that the suggestion was not made with a sufficient knowledge of the subject. It has always been considered a very great anomaly that freeholders in towns should vote for the counties on behalf of freeholds situate in towns. At the time when the first Reform Bill was under consideration Lord Althorp was very favourable to a provision that freeholders should vote where their freeholds were situate. But the Cabinet, as a whole, found the arrangement difficult. It was desired, however, by many Whig Gentlemen, and the division on that subject was the only one by which Government was seriously inconvenienced. Indeed, Sir, you yourself supported the Motion at that time as a county Member. A great deal, of course, is to be said in favour of an old franchise; but when we were called on to deal with the question we determined to encounter it. We did so, because not merely was the anomaly in itself a great one, but because it had recently been terribly abused. A great number of split votes had been forged. I still

think the anomaly cannot be defended, but prescription is doubtless in its favour. But the present Government have gone out of their way to aggravate the evil. I am sure they must have done so without a fair understanding of what the consequences will be, because my hon. friend the Member for Staffordshire (Mr. Adderley) the other day showed what its operation would be like, in stating that in a district of his county one town alone would send forth 5,000 voters under this qualification. I am, however, now obliged to pass from that subject, because there are several topics on which I must touch, and there is one which I have no wish to avoid, and that is the borough franchise.

A reduction in the borough franchise is the real cause of the introduction of this Bill; and the real cause of the reduction of the borough franchise is a wish to introduce the working classes to their fair share in the constituent body. Upon this subject I shall speak without reserve; I think it is not becoming in a public man to speak on such a subject with reserve. I shall divest the question entirely from all sentiment; and I think, after the speech of my right hon. friend the Member for Hertfordshire (Sir E. Bulwer Lytton), and the speech of the right hon. Member for Calne (Mr. Lowe), yesterday, the Chancellor of the Exchequer must have had quite enough of the sentimental view of the case. The Chancellor of the Exchequer asked us whether we were afraid of the working men; but I do not think that is the question before the House. I take it for granted that Gentlemen on this side of the House, as well as Gentlemen on the other side, are not afraid of anything which, as rational men in the exercise of their duty, they are bound to encounter. The question before us is not whether we are

afraid of the working man, but whether we can improve the English Constitution.

Now, I hold the English Constitution not to be a phrase, but to be a fact. I hold it to be a polity founded on distinct principles, and aiming at definite ends. I hold our Constitution to be a monarchy, limited by the co-ordinate authority of bodies of the subjects which are invested with privileges and with duties, for their own defence and for the common good; the so-called Estates of the Realm. One of these Estates of the Realm is the Estate of the Commons, of which we are the representatives. Now, of course, the elements of the Commons vary, and must be modified according to the vicissitudes and circumstances of a country like England. Nevertheless, the original scheme of the Plantagenets may always guide us. The Commons consisted of the proprietors of the land after the barons, the citizens and burgesses, and the skilled artisans. Well, these are elements I wish to see in them, which I wish to preserve, and, if necessary, to increase; but I wish also to retain the original character of the Constitution. I wish to legislate in the spirit of our Constitution, not departing from the genius of the original scheme. The elements of the Estate of the Commons must be numerous, and they must be ample, in an age like this, but they must be choice. Our constituent body should be numerous enough to be independent, and select enough to be responsible. We, who are the representatives of the Commons, do not represent an indiscriminate multitude, but a body of men endowed with privileges which they enjoy, but also entrusted with duties which they must perform.

When we had to consider this question in 1858-9 we had to discover what was the proportion which these skilled artisans, these handicraftsmen of the Plantagenets,

possessed in this great scheme. After the best computation that we could make, we arrived at the result that they were about one-eighth of the constituent body. That did not seem to us to be enough, and therefore we had to consider how they could be increased to that amount which we deemed was a sufficient proportion. We had first to consider whether that should be done by a reduction of the borough franchise. We acknowledged no political principle in the amount of the existing borough franchise; but we believed it a convenient arrangement, a satisfactory, a successful, and a popular arrangement, which every year grew stronger, and which it was most unwise unnecessarily to disturb. But we should never have hesitated for a moment between the questions whether we should reduce the borough franchise, or whether we should exclude the working classes of the country from a fair share in the Estate of the Commons. We believed it was dangerous to reduce the borough franchise. We did not see where it would end if we once commenced to reduce that franchise; and we were of opinion that to reduce it a little might not open an entry into the Estate of the Commons to those whom we desired to see admitted. We, therefore, endeavoured by other means to obtain that result; and by careful calculation we thought we had arrived at those means. We calculated that by the means we proposed, but on which I shall not dwell now further than to observe that some of them have been adopted by the present Government, we should have doubled the number of the constituent body.

Well, Sir, the House knows what was the fortune of those efforts, and I do not for a moment wish to impugn the decision. But the Chancellor of the Exchequer

and the Secretary of State for the Home Department taunted me because in 1859 I expressed a willingness on the part of the Government of Lord Derby to reduce, if necessary, the borough franchise. Why, there was no inconsistency in that. Sir, in our appeal to the country we had to deal with a majority in this House of 140 against us, and though we gained much support, there was not eventually an absolute majority in favour of our policy. But we felt bound not to desert the subject, and after this appeal to the country we were obliged to consider it in reference to the result of the general election. But has nothing happened since 1859 with regard to this question? Have not the seven years which have elapsed since that time been some of the most remarkable that have ever passed in the history of England? While the working classes have been occupied, prosperous, and contented; while they have not been studying the principles on which the representation ought to be founded; on the contrary, during these seven years, the intellect of England, the thought of the most intelligent, and cultivated, and most enlightened men in the country, have intently been studying the principles of representation, and considering those questions which hitherto have baffled statesmen. Sir, I do not give it as my own opinion, but I give it as my observation, that the opinion of the country—I mean that impartial and intelligent opinion which really regulates the country—is this—that though they are desirous that the choicest members of the working classes should form a part—and no unimportant portion—of the Estate of the Commons, they recoil from and reject a gross and indiscriminate reduction of the franchise. That, I believe, is the real opinion of the

country, and, Sir, no one has contributed more to that opinion than the hon. Member for Westminster (Mr. J. Stuart Mill) himself. I listened with surprise to the speech which he made the other night, because it appeared to me to be not altogether consistent with his writings, and with those opinions of his which have very much influenced the convictions of society. I am not going to taunt the hon. Gentleman with writings which he published twenty or twenty-five years ago; I speak only of his recent writings, with which we are all acquainted, and particularly of his last edition of his latest book, written after our failure of 1859, and after the other experiment of Lord John Russell, when the mind of the hon. Gentleman was full of those considerable political events, and after he had given all his thought to the subject. All that I have read in that work is inconsistent with the recent language of the hon. Gentleman, because, as I understand the purport of the speeches here, he is in favour of an indiscriminate reduction of the franchise, and, so far as I understood him, of an illimitable reduction.

Now, that was not the conclusion which I gathered from the most recent writings of the hon. Gentleman. He was certainly always in favour of a general, not to say universal, suffrage, but qualified by conditions of a character which probably might induce almost every Gentleman on this side of the House to accept his proposition. There was certainly to have been the representation of minorities. The principle of plurality of voting was also strongly enforced; but certainly we did not hear anything about the representation of minorities or plurality of voting in the speech of the hon. Gentleman the other night. The conditions on which he upheld universal suffrage

might recommend its adoption to us to-morrow. The first is, that the suffrage should not be confined to the male sex. Now, I have always been of opinion that, if there is to be universal suffrage, women have as much right to vote as men. And more than that, a woman having property now ought to have a vote in a country in which she may hold manorial courts and is sometimes called upon to act in parochial offices. But there is another condition of the universal suffrage of the hon. Member for Westminster to which I must really call the attention of the House and of the Chancellor of the Exchequer. It is that, though the suffrage is to be universal, no man is to exercise the franchise who does not pay taxes. That is an excellent condition. I know what hon. Gentlemen below the gangway will say. They will say that everybody pays taxes—on sugar, tea, tobacco, and so forth. But that does not satisfy the hon. Member for Westminster (Mr. J. Stuart Mill). He says, 'I do not mean indirect taxes. Indirect taxes are no security whatever for the prudence of an individual, or the fitness of a man to have a vote. I must have direct taxes.' Well, that seemed to me rather a difficulty, but I have confidence in philosophers, and I felt that the difficulty would be solved. Statesmen and politicians are a narrow-minded race of men. They live within a limited sphere of experience, and you do not get much out of them if they leave it. But a philosopher is an exuberant and imaginative being, and the hon. Gentleman was ready with an admirable expedient which somewhat surprises me, though it is rather simple than original. He said, 'We must have universal suffrage, and every man must pay direct taxation, and what I would propose would be that there should be a poll tax.' It is a very great thing to have a future.

We know now what will be the future of this country when that philosophical Cabinet, which I understand is intended, shall take its place upon that bench. A poll tax for England! Such is the basis of your future finance; and we know that there are some other measures preparing in the same armoury. A poll tax for England, combined with a compulsory measure of education and compulsory cleanliness—it will be the admiration of cosmopolitan Europe! But I fear before nine months are passed the whole country will be in a state of insurrection.

There is one point of primary importance which ought not to be evaded in this debate. I have stated my view as to what ought to be the position of the working classes in reference to their share in the constituency. I wish them to take their position in the Estate of the Commons, and have an adequate share of that great and privileged order. What is the number of the working classes now enfranchised? That is a subject upon which the greatest mystery exists. Information has been given to the House which seems to have startled everybody, and Ministers more than anybody else. Yet it appears to me that the subject is one on which we ought to have accurate information before we can give any opinion upon this Bill; and I want further information. There is one startling fact. We always used to be told, when we were discussing questions of this kind, that before the Reform Bill all the freemen and scot and lot voters were working men. It turns out that at no period before the Reform Bill were the majority of the freemen and the scot and lot voters working men. On the contrary, they were to be found in quite different classes of society; and many of them were among the gentry. We have a

return showing that the number of freemen and scot and lot voters now is 50,478, of whom 28,000 belong to the working classes, so that 45 per cent. of the whole are working men. We may take that proportion as a good guide to the relative proportions at the time of the Reform Bill, when there were 108,000 freemen and scot and lot voters, of whom we may take it 48,000 were working men. When the Reform Bill was passed there were 174,000 ten-pounder householders; and we want to know now how many of them were working men. There is an estimate of the time of Lord Althorp, which set them down at one-twelfth; but I think that an under-estimate. I would calculate that they formed one-ninth of the whole, and put them down at 19,000. These figures give a total of 68,000 freemen, scot and lot voters, and ten-pounders at the time of the Reform Bill belonging to the working classes, compared with 128,603 now; so that they have increased 90 per cent., and the proportion is 27 or 28 per cent. now compared with 23 per cent. then. These figures show that the House ought to hesitate a little before it comes to a decision upon this subject, because at the present rate of increase, 10,140 a year are added to the borough constituency, and, giving to the working classes 60 per cent. of this increase, in ten years that increase would make the working classes one-third of the whole borough constituency. One-third of the borough constituency seems to me to be rather a fair proportion.

But, says the Chancellor of the Exchequer, 'the working classes have, I admit, one-fourth of the borough constituency; but as regards the borough and county constituencies, taken together, they have only one-seventh.' Now that, I think, is a fallacy. If you

want to estimate the amount of the working classes which ought to be in the borough constituencies, you must make your calculation in connection with the borough constituency alone. If you desire to calculate the position in this respect occupied by the working classes generally, then you must make your estimate, having regard not only to the borough, but to the county constituencies. That, however, is an estimate, in making which we have no official information to guide us. I must not exactly go so far, because I have something here at which the House will perhaps be startled. The Chancellor of the Exchequer seemed to doubt what I said on this subject the other night, when he said that the working classes had no share in the county constituencies, and spoke of the working man in a county constituency as 'the fly in the pot of ointment.' But I was not satisfied with his view. I recollected that the number of land societies in the rural districts was very considerable, and I had observed that in villages in Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire, in which when I first knew them there was not a single working man in the constituencies, working men now composed one-sixth of those constituencies.

But let me turn to the North. I have by me a statement which I will put before the House briefly, but which I regard as of great importance. I have received it from a Yorkshireman, who is known to every Yorkshire gentleman in the House, and who is high authority on the point to which he refers. He analyses the county constituency in his township of the West Riding, ranking those who compose it under four different heads—the upper class, the middle class, the lower middle, and the working men receiving weekly wages under 30*s.*; he gives me these lists in detail, and he

adds that he is as well acquainted with the whole Riding as he is with his township, and that he is confident there are at this moment upwards of 15,000 working men living by weekly wages, who possess the suffrage in the West Riding. ['No, no!'] An hon. Gentleman says 'No,' but I leave him to digest this statement at his leisure. Such information comes to hand every day. Here is a land agent who states that he is Conservative agent for South Derbyshire—I do not know him—and he assures me that he believes he is correct in stating that there are more 40*s.* freeholders in South Derbyshire than all the other freeholders and 50*l.* occupiers put together.

I think I have shown, then, that the condition of the working classes in this respect is not such as has been stated. The question is, have they or have they not a fair proportion of that Estate of the Commons of which they are entitled to be members? I do not say they have. I say that you should enquire—that you should pause—that you should obtain sufficient information, before you make a change; but, above all, that you should act in the spirit of the English Constitution. I think that this House should remain a House of Commons, and not become a House of the People, the House of a mere indiscriminate multitude, devoid of any definite character, and not responsible to society, and having no duties and no privileges under the Constitution. Are we to consider this subject in the spirit of the English Constitution, or are we to meet it in the spirit of the American Constitution? I prefer to consider the question in the spirit of our own Constitution. In what I say I do not intend to undervalue American institutions; quite the reverse. I approve of American institutions, for they are adapted to the country in which

they exist. The point I would always consider is, whether the institutions of a country are adapted to the country where they are established. But I say none of the conditions exist in England which exist in America, and make those institutions flourish so eminently there. If I see a great body of educated men in possession of a vast expanse of cultivated land, and behind them an illimitable region where the landless may become landowners, then I should recognise a race to whom might be entrusted the responsibility of sovereign power. The blot of the American political system is not essential to it, but accidental; it is those turbulent and demoralised mobs which exist in the cities of the sea coast which constitute so great a reproach to American institutions. If, however, you introduce those institutions into England, I believe the effect would be disastrous. You would not gain that which is excellent in the American system, but that which is not an essential quality, though a most disgraceful and demoralising accident. You would have the rule of mobs in great towns, and the sway of turbulent multitudes. And if a dominant multitude were to succeed in bringing the land of England into the condition of the land in America, they would after all get but a limited area, and that only after a long struggle, in the course of which the great elements of our civilisation would disappear, and England, from being a first-rate kingdom, would become a third-rate Republic.

I regret to hear principles which must pull down the prosperity of an old country like this advocated in this House by men of ability. The hon. Member for Montrose (Mr. Baxter) deprecated any allusion to speeches elsewhere. That is very convenient. It is very con-

venient to make speeches in two places, and not to be answered in either. I am not one of those who depreciate the talents or character of the member for Birmingham. I admire his abilities, I listen to his eloquence often with delight, and I recognise his unexampled energy. I regret, however, that such gifts should be exercised—I doubt not conscientiously—in favour of principles which, if successful, I believe would be fatal to this country. Sir, it is very disagreeable to me, as it must be to any Gentleman in our debates in this House, to be constantly commenting on the language and conduct of any individual Member. I feel the embarrassment and pain of it all; but, Sir, it is not my fault. If the Member for Birmingham were in his right place this would not occur. I have to make remarks on Gentlemen opposite, and they in turn make remarks on us. It is the policy of a Government that we oppose, it is the manœuvres of an Opposition that they impugn; and the knowledge that we are dealing with corporations softens the asperity which must sometimes occur in the heat of our political conflicts. If the Member for Birmingham were seated on that (the Treasury) Bench, where he ought to be seated, we should fear him no longer. We should only fear Her Majesty's Minister. And, therefore, if the Member for Birmingham, who really, though not avowedly, dictates the policy of the country, is not in the position in which he ought to be, I must, disagreeable as it is to me, comment on the conduct of so eminent an individual. Some of my friends have spoken with indignation of the manifesto which the Member for Birmingham has thought fit to publish.* My feeling, when I read that letter, was not

* During the Easter recess, Mr. Bright had addressed a remarkable letter to a meeting held at Birmingham to consider

a feeling of indignation, nor was it one of contempt—nothing of the kind; it was a feeling of mortification; I felt I had totally misunderstood the character of the individual with whom we had been so long in communion, which I thought was at least dignified. I thought, for example, that the Member for Birmingham was proud of being a Member of the House of Commons, and I confess I saw with satisfaction that the House of Commons sometimes seemed not disinclined to be proud of him. But that he should leave us only to hold us up to public obloquy, was to me a cause not of indignation, but of disappointment; that he should speak of us in a manner utterly deficient in feeling and candour, wanting alike in truth and taste, was—I speak it unfeignedly—most painful. He was the last man, knowing what I know of him in this House, that I should have supposed would hold up the House of Commons to public reprobation, almost with the truculence of a Danton.

Sir, it is not for me to vindicate the House of Commons—that is not my proud position—that is the privilege of another; and I must say it was a source to me of astonishment that the leader of the House of Commons, who must have been in that part of the country at the time—I know not whether at the same meetings—with no lack of opportunity,

the Government Reform Bill. In it he stigmatised the opposition offered to the measure from both sides of the House as a 'dirty conspiracy,'—'men who in every speech they utter insult the working men;' and gave it as his opinion that 'if Parliament Street, from Charing Cross to the venerable abbey, were filled with men seeking a Reform Bill, as it was two years ago with men come to do honour to an illustrious Italian, these slanderers of their countrymen would learn to be civil, if they did not learn to love freedom.'

attending theatres and making speeches after dinner, should not have noticed that address—should not have vindicated the character and the honour of that Assembly of whose privileges and honour it ought to be his greatest pride to be the champion. They were no hurried words—they had not the excuse of oratorical excitement—they were penned, and penned with malice prepense. The right hon. Gentleman could not find time to notice them at one of his dinners given to him by the Financial Reformers of Liverpool, or at least attended by some of the most distinguished of those provincial fanatics; though he could find time to criticise the comparatively insignificant letter of the right hon. Member for Calne (Mr. Lowe), which was the staple of one of his speeches. He could not find time to comment on the letter of the hon. Member for Birmingham, although it was an attack upon the character of those of whom he is the leader, and upon the honour of the House of which he ought to feel proud to be the chief.

But, Sir, although I have not the honour to be the leader of the House of Commons—although that high position is not mine—I am here at least, by the favour and indulgence of my friends, the leader of the Tory party. And I take this the earliest opportunity of telling the hon. Member for Birmingham that the attack which he has made upon the Tory party is one which he cannot substantiate. He has said that the Tory party are only anxious to plunge the country into war, in order to divert it from that domestic progress and that beneficent course of policy to which he has devoted all his energies. Sir, I want to know from the hon. Member what grounds he has for making that assertion. We have heard from the

Chancellor of the Exchequer enough during the recess about the last thirty years. I have been in this House with the right hon. Gentleman for nearly those last thirty years, of which we have lately been told so much; and the hon. Member for Birmingham himself has sat here for more than two-thirds of that time. He has therefore had some experience in our public affairs, and has taken a part in our deliberations upon them. What war, then, I ask, have we plunged the country into?

There was the Crimean war. Were the Tories the authors of that? They certainly might have carried that war on in a different way, but they were not its authors. Why, Sir, when the hon. Gentleman charges us with these great offences against the prosperity and the fortunes of the realm, has he forgotten that the man whom he especially ought to reverence rose in his place in this House and declared solemnly that in his opinion if Lord Derby's Government had not been turned out of office in 1852 the Crimean war would never have happened? These were the words uttered in this House by Mr. Cobden.

Well, then, Sir, there was another war. Did we take advantage of the Italian war to plunge this country into it? Is it not upon record—although the record was not published till after the delusive Amendment, which drove us from office, was passed—is it not upon record that every fair means was used by this country to prevent that war, and that nothing but the headstrong conduct of Austria occasioned it? But whether that occasioned it or not, this is quite clear, that the moment that fatal step was taken we would not in any way sanction any of those proceedings, and withdrew this country entirely from it.

Then, I say, what reason has the hon. Gentleman to say that the Tories are always anxious to plunge the country into war in order to divert the people from civil progress?

Well, Sir, there has been another war in Europe during these last thirty years—the war between Denmark and Germany. Did we want to plunge the country into war upon that subject? Is it not notorious—has it not been proved by documents laid on this table—that the late Prime Minister of England and the present Prime Minister of England did wish to plunge this country into that war? Are not the despatches in existence and in the possession of every Member, inviting France to join with England in going to war with Germany on behalf of Denmark? And, indeed, nothing but such a policy could justify the promises they held out to that Denmark which they betrayed. And what prevented that war? They resolved to wait until the meeting of Parliament to decide on their policy and to control rebellious colleagues; but the conduct of the Opposition, the declarations that I made with the full consent and by the advice of those with whom I act, prevented that war. ['No, no!' *and cheers.*] It was notorious, and I believe the hon. Gentleman himself has admitted it, that we prevented that war about Denmark.

Well, then, how can he justify these statements, made by a man of his influence in the country, calumniating, I will say, a great political party? But, says the hon. Gentleman in the same manifesto, it is not in Europe alone that they are desirous to engage us in war; the Tories want to involve us in war with America; it is America they hate, it is America to which they are directing all their attention, and if that party were to

come into power a war with America is certain. These, Sir, are the representations he makes to the people of England, and I want to know upon what grounds he makes them? Why, Sir, it is upon record that during that painful struggle I did all that I could, assisted by my colleagues, and especially by my noble friend the Member for King's Lynn (Lord Stanley), to moderate the councils of this House, and to avert that which I believe would have been the greatest evil that could possibly occur—a war between this country and the United States; and I hope, I sometimes hope, that I contributed to that result. No doubt there were Gentlemen, not confined to one side of the House, who expressed different opinions on that subject, and who wished for the recognition of the Southern States; but, Sir, have we come to this pass in England, that high-spirited men, on whichever side of the House they sit, are not to give expression to their views on public affairs? No; I confess it, there were Members on this side of the House—more than one man of considerable ability—who took a very decided view, and believed it to be for the honour and interest of England that the Southern States should be recognised. They did me the honour of consulting me upon the subject, and I endeavoured to moderate their feelings. And what was their reply? They said, 'We have every encouragement from a portion of the Cabinet, and it is your holding back that prevents a great result for the benefit of the country.' And had they no cause for their belief? Is it not the fact, and can the hon. Member for Birmingham—who has accused me personally of endeavouring to bring about a war with America; who has accused me in common with the great Tory party—can he deny that those who were desirous of effecting

the recognition of the Southern Confederacy had every encouragement from the Government? Is it not notorious that one of the leading Members of the Government—one who is its chief organ in this House—made one of those pilgrimages of passion of which we have lately had a specimen, and not content with speaking in this House, made in another place an inflammatory harangue, which, if it meant anything, meant that the Cabinet of the Queen was on the point of recognising the Confederate States. Did not that speech disturb every market in Europe? Did it not affect the price of public securities and create confusion throughout the world? And yet this Minister is the tried friend of the hon. Member, who goes down into the country and says that I and my friends are those who are always anxious to plunge the country into war!

But, Sir, the hon. Gentleman is not content with imputing to us an anxiety to involve the country in external calamities; he says the Tory party have been the cause of all the abject misery and wretchedness which the people of England have endured. Now, I will take the last thirty years—they have been dinned into our ears often enough at these Liverpool banquets—and I ask any man, whether he sits on this or that side of the House, what has been the conduct of the Tory party in this respect? During the last thirty years there have been twenty-eight measures introduced into this House, the object of which has been to ameliorate the condition of the people—to reduce their hours of labour, to secure for them the payment of their wages in coin of the realm, to save them from torture and oppression in the mine and in the colliery, to extend to all engaged in their ingenious arts, in the bleaching-ground, in the printing works,

the benefits of that successful amelioration which had been introduced into the cotton and woollen factories. Sir, all these measures were passed with immense difficulty. Never was an opposition exercised stronger, more resolute, more pitiless than that which was organised against these measures. But they passed. And who passed them? Not one of those measures but was proposed by a Gentleman sitting upon these benches. Not one of those measures was passed but by the united energies of the Tory party. And who opposed them? The Liberal Government of that day generally opposed them; but they were opposed mainly and chiefly by the influence of one individual, who offered, as he does on all occasions when he opposes anything, an opposition that is formidable because it is able—who threw all his energy and eloquence into the resistance to those claims, and who for a time retarded their advancement; but, notwithstanding his power of organisation—notwithstanding his energy and eloquence—he was ultimately defeated, and that was the hon. Member for Birmingham!

Shall I be told that these were merely the schemes of dreamy philanthropists, that they were part of the maudlin humanitarianism that has been referred to in this debate? I appeal to the last thirty years. The hon. Member for Westminster says we know nothing of the working classes, and the hon. Member for Lambeth (Mr. T. Hughes), in his freakish speech, claimed a monopoly of knowledge and interest in them. But all I know is that, years ago, when this struggle took place, our homes were full day after day, and year after year, of these men. They raised a large fund in the manufacturing districts in order to pay for deputations to be

constantly in the metropolis, and communicating with Members of Parliament. They communicated with me, they were frequently under my roof. I made their acquaintance to this degree, that when a great calamity occurred a few years ago they wrote to recall their names to my recollection. I think, then, I know them, and I think my noble Friend near me, to whom they are more deeply indebted than to myself, knows something of these working classes. I remember when we passed through the lobby of the old House, which many of you will recollect, there they were, sometimes with their wives and children, and they would cling to you with their petitions when you entered the House of Commons. These, then, were not measures of a pseudo-philanthropy; these men were persons in earnest, and they felt that their interests and their future happiness and prosperity depended on the success of those measures. They felt in them an interest which, perhaps, we cannot experience on any subject. They felt that their all was at stake, and that we were their only friends. But they feared the opposition of those who are now forsooth the peculiar friends of the working classes!

Well, Sir, I hope I am justified in vindicating the great party on this side of the House from these elaborate attacks made to the people of England by one who is the representative of new opinions, who influences the policy of the Government, but whose opinions, I confess, in themselves, I do not believe the people of England would rally round. His striking eloquence and his great abilities may enable him to place them before the country in a captivating manner, but they are in my mind opposed to the instincts and to the character of the English people. I believe that

English and not American principles will predominate in this country. But I am willing to confess that, though the opinions of the hon. Member for Birmingham may be dangerous, the hon. Gentleman has at least one excellent quality—that of candour. He never conceals his opinions. He states them with frankness which is not observable in the measures of the Government. We all know what the hon. Member wishes to do; and, though his principles are often dangerous, and, if not baffled, might prove fatal in their consequences, we are always able to guard against them. But I think the peril is here, that the hon. Gentleman the Member for Birmingham has, to use a phrase borrowed from the practice of our noblest pastime, a 'confederate,' and that confederate sits upon the Treasury Bench!

Now, Sir, I ventured to put before the House to-night the principles upon which Parliament ought to proceed with this question of Reform, if it proceed at all. Those principles are English, and not American. It ought to proceed upon the principle that we are the House of Commons, and not the House of the People; and that we represent a great political order in the State, and not an indiscriminate multitude. And in estimating what share the working classes should possess in the power of the State—a share which I do not at all begrudge them—we ought to act and to form that estimate according to the spirit of the English Constitution. The hon. Member for Birmingham takes an opposite view, and states it very candidly. But the right hon. Gentleman the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the leader of this House, and the counsellor of the Sovereign, goes to Liverpool and confesses to American principles in their widest sense. ['No, no!']

Well, I would make no statement to this House that I am not prepared to substantiate. I have expressed pretty clearly my views upon the English Constitution, and confidently assert that they are correct. I say that the right hon. Gentleman, following as he always does the example of the hon. Member for Birmingham, went through the country on a tour of agitation, and I say that he propounded a policy founded upon American and not upon English principles. And I am here to prove what I state.

What did he do? He went to a well-arranged meeting, and had, of course, well considered what he intended to say. And what did he say? He made some observations about the general policy of the Government, and then referred to the real business of the Session. He said, 'We have brought forward a Reform Bill. It is a very moderate measure. It will introduce 400,000 additional voters into the constituencies.' Well, there may or there may not be good reasons for introducing 400,000 additional voters, but we have never yet argued that matter. We can do that, indeed, in Committee, if we ever get there. But if your views of the English Constitution are the same as mine, it is a very great addition to the Estate of the Commons. The right hon. Gentleman said, 'We have brought in a very moderate measure, and we propose by this measure to add 400,000 voters to the present constituency.' The right hon. Gentleman treats with great obloquy and contempt all opposed to him. The noble Lord (Earl Grosvenor) proposes this Amendment, the common sense of which is recognised by the country. And what does the right hon. Gentleman say? He says, 'He does this, notwithstanding the moderation of our measure—only 400,000 introduced, while there are 4,500,000 of

living and breathing men, citizens like ourselves, payers of taxes like ourselves, bound to every civil duty like ourselves, having an interest in the peace and order of the country like ourselves.' Very well, but the object of discussion is to elicit truth. What is the interpretation to be put upon this? I say—every man of candour must say—there is only one interpretation—that the 4,500,000 have as much right to be added to the constituent body and to exercise the franchise, although it may be prudent for the Chancellor of the Exchequer to propose that only 400,000 shall at present 'be brought within the pale of the Constitution.' But if you admit the principle that the 4,500,000 behind them have an equal right to enter the English Constitution, you are introducing American principles which must be fatal to this country, though they may be adapted to America.

I say, therefore, that no other interpretation can be put on the language of the right hon. Gentleman; but if there were any doubt, that doubt can remain no longer. Remember the speech he made a year and a half ago, which confounded his colleagues, confused the House, and perplexed and agitated the country, when he based the title of admission to the suffrage on the rights of man. Well, he published his speech—he published an explanatory preface which nobody understood. He did a good many other things, and the matter passed off. But there was no mistake on the part of the right hon. Gentleman when he made that speech. He published his preface to pacify his colleagues, but he never changed his opinion; and in Liverpool on this occasion—a formal occasion, not one when a man speaks in heat, when a Minister, above all, considers well what he says—he again expressed the opinion that

the suffrage was a moral right, and ought to be so considered. Speaking of the change in the condition and means of the mass of the community, these were his words—

> This change and that growing and constantly increasing capacity which we see constitute not only a fitness, but in a moral sense constitute a right.

There it is—'constitute in a moral sense a right.' The right, we know, does not exist in a legal sense; in what other sense than a moral sense can it exist? That completely vindicates the statement I have made. Now, Sir, I have a passage here which I am sure the House will listen to with attention, for it contains the words of one of the wisest men that ever sat in this House. Although I was in no political connection with him, but the reverse, I took the liberty, and I remember it not without solace, when we lost him, of spontaneously offering my tribute to his character and his services. These are the words of Sir George Lewis—

> You may talk of the rudeness of Monarchical Government, but I defy you to point out anything in Monarchy so irrational as counting votes, instead of weighing them, as making a decision depend not on the knowledge, ability, experience, or fitness of the judges, but upon their number.

Now, Sir, these are wise words to be remembered. Sir George Lewis was a great loss to this country; he was a greater loss to the House of Commons; but he was the greatest loss to the Gentlemen opposite. Sir George Lewis would not have built up the constituent body on the rights of man; he would not have entrusted the destiny of this country to the judgment of a numerical majority; he would not have counselled the Whig party to reconstruct their famous institutions on the

American model and to profit in time by the wisdom of the children of their loins. Sir, it is because I wish to avert from this country such calamities and disasters that I shall vote for the Amendment of the noble Lord.

MAY 14, 1866.

On the second reading of the Redistribution of Seats Bill.*

Mr. DISRAELI: Sir, when the right hon. Gentleman the Chancellor of the Exchequer introduced this Bill to the notice of the House, he favoured us with the views of Her Majesty's Government with respect to the subject of small boroughs. According to the views of Her Majesty's Government, those boroughs are not really liable to the charge that has so frequently been made against them; while, on the other hand, one of the merits that has usually been alleged in their favour was, according to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, not deserved.

With regard to the first point—namely, the imputation of bribery—Her Majesty's Government are of opinion, and I entirely agree with them, that no charge can be made against the small boroughs particularly on that head. Unfortunately, it is not only the small boroughs of the country that are open to the imputation of venality in election matters. On the contrary, we know very well that in the large proportion of small boroughs the elections are conducted in a manner creditable to their reputation. No doubt there are some in which a portion of the constituency are affected by the same improper influences that prevail in some of the larger boroughs. But that is an exercise of bribery which, however it be deprecated and de-

* See note, page 450.

plored, is at least an evidence of a conflict of opinion. There are, unquestionably, cases of small boroughs in which it has been proved to the satisfaction of this House that venality has been organised and has been generally exercised; but the House has never met with any difficulty in dealing with such cases. Long before the Reform of the House of Commons, the instance of Grampound, among others, showed that our predecessors were perfectly able to deal with such cases, and St. Albans and Sudbury, in our own time, have furnished similar examples. I shall not refer to the conduct of constituencies now under judicial enquiry, beyond expressing a hope that in the case of any constituency, where the charges made against it before a Committee of the House of Commons are satisfactorily proved before the tribunal appointed to investigate them, the precedents of Grampound, St. Albans, and Sudbury will not be forgotten, and that we shall not see placed at the head of one of these new groups of boroughs a town which ought, I think, to be provided for in a very different and in a less honourable manner.

With regard to the second point—the alleged merits of the small boroughs, to which the Chancellor of the Exchequer believes they are not entitled—I well recollect the speech of the Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1859 on the subject of small boroughs—a speech which we, of course, all listened to with gratification, but which, I must say for myself, I heard with some degree of amazement. It appeared to me, indeed, to be the echo of the debates of 1832, which upon that subject were merely traditions of the 18th century. I would not attempt in any way to vindicate the small borough system, because these small boroughs

have been the means of introducing into the House of Commons a Pitt, a Fox, and a Canning.* In a free country, and under a popular Constitution, such men as Pitt, Fox, and Canning, will always, I believe, find a place in this Assembly. But I cannot help thinking that the view which Her Majesty's Government have taken of the system of small boroughs is too contracted and of too meagre a character; and, as I believe that in a right appreciation of the question very important consequences are involved, I would take this opportunity of begging the House most deliberately and seriously to reflect upon the subject and its consequences.

Now, I apprehend, or will at all events accept, that the real cause of all these Reform Bills which have been introduced since the passing of the great measure of 1832 has been to render this House a more complete representation of the country and of its various attributes. It is not difficult, it requires no profound or adroit statesmanship, to secure for the great producing interests of this country an ample and a satisfactory representation. The counties of England offer to the land, with its various products and its accumulated capital, a natural and an easy mode of being represented in Parliament. The chief seats of industry furnish competent men in sufficient numbers to represent the wealth, the ingenuity, and the skill of our manufactures. Perhaps the mode by which a merchant may get into this House is not altogether so easy and obvious. But still we know that there are, and that there must always be, influential constituencies connected with the commerce and navigation of the country to which a merchant of eminence may appeal with confidence

* Mr. Pitt was first returned for Appleby, Mr. Fox for Midhurst, and Mr. Canning for Newport in the Isle of Wight.

for support. But there are a variety of interests in England, and connected with England, not only various but important and material interests, which cannot be ranged under the three heads of land, manufactures, or commerce. There are a variety of important trading interests of that character. There are also classes which are, perhaps, the most educated and enlightened in the country, and most considerable in their influence upon that public opinion which ultimately regulates our affairs—I mean the professional classes. And in employing that term, I do not refer merely to the learned professions, one of which cannot sit in this House and another will not; and, although I should deplore the time when we had not in our active legislation a sufficient number of gentlemen of the long robe, and should regret our again having an *indoctum Parliamentum*, I would refer particularly to those who, in the present day, carve out their fortunes and obtain their incomes by the application of science to social life, like the great body of civil engineers, for example, men, too, of letters, and all those who pursue the liberal arts as a profession. But, besides all these, we are to recollect that England is the metropolis of a Colonial Empire; that she is at the head of a vast number of colonies, the majority of which are yearly increasing in wealth; and that every year these colonies send back to these shores their capital and their intelligence in the persons of distinguished men, who are naturally anxious that these interests should be represented in the House of Commons. And last, and perhaps the chiefest, there is our great Indian Empire. It was always the boast of this country that that distant, extensive, and gorgeous appanage was always represented in the House of Commons, and that no question could arise

without the House, from the very bosom of its Members, and not merely from official sources, being able to command the assistance and information of men of accurate knowledge, and of the soundest judgments upon the matter.

While we are, therefore, upon the second reading of the Bill for the Redistribution of Seats, I wish to ask in what way these various interests and individuals are to be represented in the House of Commons if you do not retain the small borough system, or furnish some substitute for it? Let the House observe how the present system practically operates. A county Member, as a general rule, must be a resident. It is not merely that it is the custom of the country, but it is a practice which arises from the necessities of the case. The representative duties of a county Member are not confined to this House. They are also local and continuous, and therefore it is most natural that men, for such offices, will elect their neighbours and those who live among them. But the same feeling has of late years been equally characteristic of our great towns and cities. They have increased so much in population, in wealth, in education, and in intelligence; that they are able to find in their own community men capable of representing them in this House, and who possess not only the requisite knowledge and education, but the still rarer gift which before they could not command—leisure. This local feeling is becoming so strong generally that you will find it prevails to a great extent in all our considerable towns and cities. I always watch with interest the proceedings of general elections, and of the last three general elections I have observed this characteristic—that the local feeling is perpetually developing itself, and that in great numbers of constituen-

cies where it was previously influential it has now become entirely predominant.

What is the practical consequence of all this? Half of the House of Commons is really shut to all the considerable interests which are not ranged under the heads of land, manufactures, and commerce, to all the professional classes now growing daily more influential, and to the due representation of our colonial and Indian interests. These are very serious considerations; and they must be well weighed by the House before they consent to destroy or greatly change the machinery by which so desirable a result has hitherto been attained without, at all events, substituting some method equally efficacious. Now, the House must remember that this is not a question as to whether the pride, the vanity, ambition, or even the interests of particular classes and particular individuals should be gratified. The presence of these men in this House may confer importance upon them, but their presence is equally important to the House itself. What I desire is, to see these interests and these views adequately represented, for, depend upon it, we shall lose influence if we are only represented by landlords and manufacturers. The question is one, therefore, which concerns the House of Commons as much, or even more, than the particular classes and individuals to whom I have referred.

Now, I want for a moment to put this question as to the influence of small boroughs practically before the House. I will not indulge in rhetorical routine about Mr. Pitt, Mr. Fox, and Mr. Canning. I will bring you to the world in which we live, and ask you to form your opinions from instances and examples drawn from daily life. For example, I see before me a gallant Gentleman (Sir Henry Rawlinson), a man

acknowledged to possess brilliant accomplishments and attainments, but who upon one subject—his knowledge of the East—is unrivalled. If to-morrow the affairs of Persia, or any question connected with Central Asia, or the farthest Ind, came under discussion, he is precisely the man to whom the House would look for advice; and it is most expedient, therefore, that he should have a seat in this House, although, unfortunately, he sits on the other side. But why is he here? Because he has been sent here by the small borough of Frome, which you are going to disfranchise. [Sir GEORGE GREY: 'We do not propose to touch Frome.'] I beg your pardon: it was touched in your first list; but, at any rate, the correction will not invalidate my argument; for to what place were we first indebted for sending the hon. and gallant Gentleman amongst us? It was the small borough of Reigate, which you do propose to disfranchise.

There is a question which at this moment is even more interesting than even Parliamentary Reform or peace or war, and that is our monetary state. It is a subject which will probably be under our discussion very shortly, and the opinions of men of experience will be received by the House with interest upon the matter. I see before me a gentleman who, if he is not at this moment, was formerly Governor of the Bank of England (Mr. K. D. Hodgson). He was, I believe I may say, one of the best Governors that the Bank has ever had, and to what place do we owe his presence in this House? The small borough of Bridport, which you are going to disfranchise. But I will not take my instances entirely from the opposite side. I have below the gangway a friend whom every one acknowledges should have a seat in this House (Mr. T. Baring), and who

is looked upon as one admirably fitted for a place in this assembly—not on account of his great wealth, although we recognise him as the prince of British merchants, but on account of his character, integrity, and intelligence. He owes his presence in this House to the small borough of Huntingdon, which you are going to disfranchise. I am of opinion that men in the position of the Governor of the Bank of England should always be Members of the House of Commons. I have had some experience of the advantage of communication with Governors and Deputy Governors of the Bank, to whom I owe much. The Governor and the Deputy Governor of the Bank of England, with whom I was placed in official communication, are both of them now Members of this House, though sitting on different sides. But they both sit for small boroughs. There is not an important colony at this moment which is not represented in this House by men of local experience, and yet they all sit for small boroughs.

And now for India. The representation of India is not as strong as in the last Parliament. One cause of the present deficiency is the loss of a Minister whose absence I think we must all deplore. He had not, perhaps, all those qualities which enable a man to control a popular assembly; but every man must acknowledge that for administrative capacity and experience few men are equal to Lord Halifax. He was perfect master of the business of the great departments of the State, and I have rarely met any man who was his equal in quickness of perception. Yet, when he spoke on Indian affairs, which he thoroughly understood, he spoke under the control and correction of independent Members who were his equals in that knowledge. I remember some who have been very much looked up to in this respect—

Sir James Hogg, Sir John Willoughby, and Mr. Prinsep. Sir James Hogg was Member for Honiton, which you are going to disfranchise; Sir John Willoughby was Member for Leominster, which you are going to disfranchise; and Mr. Prinsep was Member for Harwich, which you are going to disfranchise. These are important facts, and the House should consider them seriously. I have, perhaps, as little personal interest in this question as any Member of this House. I do not owe my entrance into public life to a small borough, nor is there any probable prospect of my seeking refuge in one for the future. Nor do I think the party with which I have the honour to be connected has any special interest in this particular system of small boroughs. But when we find that the complete representation of this country in its various attributes appears to have greatly depended upon this system of small boroughs, should we not very carefully consider the steps which are taken in regard to it? Thus, if you either destroy or greatly qualify that system, we should at least supply some adequate substitute. That is the point which I wish to impress upon you.

Well, by this Bill it is proposed to deal very extensively with this small borough system. The measure proposes to disfranchise seventy-one seats. The assertion that the disfranchisement is not complete is simply a quibble; it is disfranchisement in disguise. Virtually you are reducing the small boroughs by one-moiety, for I take it that the small boroughs may be set down as between 150 and 160. The reasons given for taking these seats are two. The first is that representation should be given to communities that have developed since the Reform Act of 1832 was passed. I entirely concur with Her Ma-

jesty's Government in that. I acknowledge that since 1832 have come into existence communities which in population, character, and property are worthy of direct representation in this House; and it is wise to give it to them. We have a list of such boroughs in the Bill before us; it is not very considerable in extent, and does not vary much from one which I recommended to your consideration seven years ago. I only regret that they have been denied during those seven years representation in Parliament. But how is that representation to be effected? Should it be effected, in the first instance, by adding to the number of Members of this House? I decline, Sir, upon this occasion, to give any definite opinion upon that point, because it is a complicated question which has never been properly discussed in this House, and would now lead us into discussion inconvenient to this debate. It is a moot point, and we leave it so at present. But there is a way by which representatives can be given to those boroughs without increasing the number of the Members of this House, and that is by decreasing the representative power of existing boroughs. I do not mean to say that that can be done upon any principle. It can only be done by virtue of what the Venetians called 'reason of State;' and action from reason of State should be had recourse to with reserve, and only in order to effect an end universally acknowledged to be beneficial. I think we are perfectly justified under the circumstances in following the course which, by-the-bye, we ourselves first proposed to pursue in 1859, and curtail what we may call the redundant representation of some boroughs in order to complete the representation of others. The first object for which this revolution is proposed is to secure representation for

those communities, the propriety of whose appearance in this House no one questions. I entirely concur in that proceeding, and in saying that I believe I express the feeling of the House.

But the Government propose this great change for another object. It is not merely to give representatives to those places which are not represented, but to add representatives to places which are already represented. Many of the great towns and counties are to receive another Member. For example, three Members are allotted to Leeds, three to Manchester, and to a considerable number of other towns and counties. Well, this involves a new principle in our representation, the principle of plurality of representation. I think it is one to be looked upon with some doubt and suspicion. I do not see how it is consistent with our electoral system, which recoils from plurality of voting. That a man shall have only one vote is, I think, a right principle. If our constituencies, for example, were founded upon the rights of man, or upon the rights of numbers, I could easily understand that you must immediately defend the minority; and I do not know that there is any more obvious or easy method of doing so than to establish plurality of voting. In fact, I have always held that if you went as far as universal suffrage, or if you submitted to any very considerable extension of the franchise, plurality of voting would be a necessary consequence. But, if you establish your constituency on the principles that hitherto have been accepted as the Constitution of this country, if you look upon your constituency as a political body or order, numerous and various—very numerous and very various, I hope, but select—then I do not think you can have plurality of voting. Then men should be equal. The elector

with 50,000*l.* a year should have his vote, just as the elector of the West Riding who lives upon his 30*s.* a week. The law of England recognises, and I hold, nobly recognises, equality—not of the man, but of the political citizen, who is invested with duties and privileges for the public good.

I know it will be said that an elector with 50,000*l.* a year has a great deal more influence than the elector who lives upon 30*s.* a week; he has the influence which results from his great fortune and his social following. I do not deny that he possesses that influence, and I say that he ought to have it. But does not the city of Manchester, when compared with one of the small boroughs represented in this House, also possess the extraordinary influence which the man of 50,000*l.* a year has? The city of Manchester has only two Members, and the borough of Harwich has two Members. If, however, the interests of the city of Manchester are assailed, it is not the two Members who rise to support it, it is a score, it is a hundred Members, directly or indirectly interested in or connected with Manchester. But if the interests of the borough of Harwich are assailed, what happens? We all know that a little before public business commences, one of the Members for Harwich rises, with representations from that borough; and though his arguments be perfectly irrefutable, and his statements clear as a mountain lake, yet you know they are met by loud cries of 'Divide,' and shouts of 'Question.' This is the way these unfortunate men, while vindicating the rights and interests of their constituents, are assailed; and then we are told that in the House of Commons Manchester and Harwich have the same degree of influence! Why, Members are sent to this House to

represent opinions, and not numbers. Is it at all necessary to represent your opinions and advocate your interests, that you should have a troop of representatives? There is a constituency quite as large as that of the West Riding since its division, and with a population scarcely less than the population of South Lancashire when its boroughs have been deducted—the Tower Hamlets; and I ask sincerely, is there any constituency in this House more ably represented than the Tower Hamlets, and by one man (Mr. Ayrton)? That hon. Gentleman is always in his place, and one of the most valuable and indefatigable attendants on our Committees; when any questions connected with the interests of his constituents are raised, which are complicated and numerous, he is always present discharging his duty, while in general debate he offers his opinions and his arguments in a manner which commands respect. It is ridiculous to ask for numbers to guard the interests of any community; secure, as they are, under the existing system.

What would be the consequence if you were to pursue the principles which you are now laying down? You must necessarily have great monotony in this House. If you once adopt the principle that the population and property of places are only to be considered in apportioning Members, you cannot stop at three, and the small constituencies may be by degrees entirely absorbed. You will have trains and troops of Members coming from one county and one place to this House. It is absurd to see six Members for South Lancashire walking into this House, six Members for only one Riding of Yorkshire, and three Members for this town and three for another. By this system the Members will be so increased that, instead of this being a classic Senate, it will have some-

thing of the turbulent character of a Polish diet. I know it may be said, though I do not think it will be, that plurality of representation is no new arrangement, because it prevailed in the time of the Plantagenets. But that is a mere quibble, and no one will, I am sure, depend upon it. We know very well that when two Members were originally decided upon it was not with reference to any political principle or organisation of political parties, which did not exist in those days. They were days when men really never acted alone. First of all, they had to travel to town together, because they were afraid of robbers. Then, when they had to put up at an inn, they were obliged to sleep in a double-bedded room, because they were afraid of ghosts. When taxes and benevolences were voted, with two Members one was pretty sure to be present; and, on the whole, it was considered a convenient arrangement. As stated in the Paston Letters, two burgesses going to town from Norfolk would be good counsel to each other.

It may be said with more reason that the Reform Act of 1832 did admit the principle of plurality of representatives. That is a graver answer; but, although I think it is most wise as far as we can to adhere to the arrangement of that Act, it is not immaculate; and the giving of three Members to half a dozen counties was not an acceptance by the Government of the day of the doctrine of plurality of Members, but a rough mode by which Lord Althorp settled the balance between the counties and the boroughs. It was thought absolutely necessary that there should be a certain number of county Members and a certain number of borough Members; but the original plan was to divide the counties with regard to the whole of England. There still was

wanting a certain number of county Members, and Lord Althorp threw them to half a dozen—I think seven—counties, which he did not think large enough to divide. But he did not do this for the sake of plurality of representation. That evil precedent, which has always been inconvenient and never popular, appears to have been followed in the case of South Lancashire. Had, however, the suggestion of 1859 been accepted, the House need not have been in the situation to have followed that precedent. We proposed in 1859 that South Lancashire should be divided, and to give it two additional Members, but now you will be embarrassed by six.

It may be said that the view I am now pressing upon the consideration of the House is inconsistent with those views which I have so long and so frequently urged as to the claims of the counties for increased representation. I think the House, if it will deign to reflect for a moment, will find no inconsistency so far as I am concerned in the matter. In the year 1848, in answer to Mr. Hume, when he brought forward his Motion for Parliamentary Reform, I first in detail laid before the House the claims of the counties. Mr. Hume's argument was this: he said that population was the only principle upon which representation ought to be settled. 'Therefore,' he said, 'you must disfranchise the small boroughs, and give their representatives to the great towns.' In general that was the scheme and the theory of Mr. Hume. Well, in 1848, it was my duty to reply to Mr. Hume's annual Motion. I then, for the sake of argument, accepted his premises; but I arrived at a different conclusion—namely, that you must give the representatives taken from the small boroughs, not to

the great towns, but to the counties. Mr. Hume was the most good-natured of men, an indefatigable Member of Parliament, but he had certainly one fault: he would deal with every subject; and in dealing with Parliamentary Reform he did not bring to its consideration adequate knowledge, and could not clearly discern the right conclusion to be drawn from his own premises. We went on thus for several years, and when Lord John Russell, in 1852, in his Reform Bill, proposed a considerable disfranchisement of the smaller boroughs, he also proposed that almost all their Members, to the number, I think, of forty-five, should be given to counties, and he then said publicly that he did so in consequence of the views which I had placed before this House, feeling it impossible to resist the conclusion at which they pointed. But, although Lord John Russell accepted my premises, I never adopted his conclusions; I never proposed that all those Members should be given to the counties, because I knew that by this remarkable system of small boroughs now under discussion the counties did find a countervailing and compensatory influence, which, though it might not fully satisfy their just claims, did afford, in a certain degree, if not a complete, an ample representation of the landed interest. Therefore, I did not counsel a violent change, such as the destruction of the small borough system would involve, bound up as it is with so many other important interests. I was for keeping things as they are, for I have always felt that the partial representation of the landed interest by means of these small boroughs gives some variety, some valuable variety, to the representation, supplies a certain element of independent character, and, on the whole, I think, has acted beneficially upon the constitution of this House.

Having shown that what I have now stated is not inconsistent with the views which I mentioned before, I come to the general scheme of this Bill. How are all these new seats to be obtained? By what arrangement are we to have counties sending in their six Members and cities their three Members, giving so much uniformity of elements and character to the representation in this House? It is to be effected by what is called a system of Grouping. This must be considered under two heads. The House is well acquainted by this time with the grouping of boroughs proposed by the Government. My objection to this system of grouping, which consists entirely of grouping representative boroughs, is that it aggravates anomalies, and that by a process of wanton injustice. It succeeds only in producing an incomplete and imperfect local representation. View it, too, with regard to expenditure—an important consideration. When you come to group representative boroughs, you are grouping societies, all of which have organised parties, traditionary politics, committees and agents, that for a century and more have managed the political interests of the community in which they live When you address those coalesced societies, this group of boroughs, you are, in fact, involved in a treble expenditure. Instead of curtailing the vast expenditure which entrance into Parliament unfortunately entails upon a Member, you are legislating in a mode that must largely increase it. But while you not only pursue a system which must largely increase expenditure, you aggravate anomalies, and that by a process of unnecessary and wanton injustice.

I will take a case, because, after all, there is nothing like an illustration; and I will take a borough which is represented on both sides of the House.

Dorchester returns two Members to Parliament, and it is to be grouped with the borough of Wareham returning one Member. Dorchester and Wareham, now represented by three Members, are to be represented by only one. The united population of those places will be 14,500, represented by one Member and losing two. But close by them is Poole, just above the magical number of 8,000, and represented by two Members! Take, again, the case of Bridport, Honiton, and Lyme. These three boroughs are represented now by five members, and their united population will amount to 15,000. Instead of five Members they are to be represented by one; and close to them will be the borough of Tiverton, which, being also just above the magical number, will be represented by two Members. This is downright and wanton injustice. I can understand your taking away one Member or two Members from these three boroughs, and to attain a great public object I can understand your taking away three or even four Members; but what I cannot understand is why the boroughs called on to make such immense sacrifices should find their united population of 15,000 represented only by one Member, when a borough close by with 8,000 inhabitants has two. A small borough may be considered an anomaly, and an ancient constitution will be always full of anomalies. But, at any rate, this must be said for the small boroughs, that they are ancient, and that they are convenient; but these groups are neither ancient nor convenient. The only result will be that you will create great jealousies, aggravate anomalies, and produce a constituency not homogeneous, and which can be only appealed to by costly and complicated means of corruption. What will result from grouping

will be the caucus system of America. Some able man will devote his energies—it will become a profession—to securing a majority in two of the boroughs; he will then make his arrangements with the candidate, and the third borough will be neither consulted nor represented.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer, in dealing with this question, was influenced by the example of the Scotch burghs, where this system of grouping is successful. But I think the Chancellor of the Exchequer committed an error—which I shall also have to advert to on another subject—he reasoned, I think, from a false analogy. There is no analogy between the grouped boroughs of Scotland and of England, as proposed by this Bill. In the first place, our boroughs to be grouped are represented boroughs, and in the case of Scotland they were unrepresented boroughs, or rather boroughs without constituencies. And the difference is very considerable. One of the great mischiefs in England will be the great distances at which some of these boroughs thus united are placed. No doubt, in Scotland, the distances are as great, or greater; but observe this difference between the two countries. Between the boroughs grouped in Scotland there is generally nothing but the country; but between the boroughs grouped in England, there are flourishing and rising unrepresented towns, which, many of them, far exceed in wealth and importance the boroughs that are thus grouped. All these towns may have submitted for a considerable time, and might yet submit, to what they deem to be the ancient Constitution of the country. But if you choose to change that Constitution, they naturally say, 'Do not have recourse to so violent and fantastic a scheme as this, the combining

of represented towns thirty miles apart, while we, in the interval, are left utterly unrepresented, being all the time in point of population, of property, and of the future that awaits us, the persons that ought to enjoy representation.' I come then to the conclusion that any system of grouping founded on the grouping of represented towns must prove a complete failure, will disappoint all expectations, and is one that this House ought not to sanction. As a general rule, I should say, in periodically, but not too often, reviewing our representative system and making our borough representation more complete and satisfactory, the true principle is in moderation and discretion to reduce the representation of the old boroughs, and to apply that redundancy to the representation of new boroughs, so that no place shall be perfectly disfranchised. It has always been our custom in this country, and one which I trust we shall not depart from, to treat with tenderness prescriptive rights, and I am quite certain that any Minister who dealt in that spirit with the old boroughs, would receive a more sincere support than he possibly can attain by anything so violent and fanciful as the scheme of grouping represented boroughs which is placed before us.

But am I therefore an opponent of the system of grouping? Far from it. I think it is one that well deserves the earnest consideration of the House; it is a powerful and an efficient instrument, if used with vigour and discretion. But where I think it might be of great advantage would be if we were to leave the present boroughs alone; and yet avail ourselves of their redundant representation, applying the principle of grouping to our unrepresented boroughs. Now, I am quite certain, if that were done, as I say, with vigour

and discretion, you would add considerably to the efficiency of the constituencies, and at the same time you would go a great way towards the solution of those immense difficulties connected with the county franchise which beset every Ministry who attempt to deal with this question, and which the present Ministry have not attempted to encounter.

Let me give a striking illustration of what would be the effect of adopting the system of grouping our unrepresented towns. I do not know that the advantage of the system could be put in a more striking manner than by reference to some places with which the House is familiar. Now, take the first of the new boroughs to be enfranchised—and I willingly and cordially approve the proposition to enfranchise them. Let me take the town of Middlesborough, in Yorkshire—a town which has very recently risen into existence, principally from the ironstone of the Cleveland hills. In 1859 it was impossible we could give a representative to Middlesborough; but it is now a town of 19,000 inhabitants (Census, 1861), and, no doubt, it is increasing rapidly. That population is not so very large and extensive that its claim to a representative, if there was not a convenient opportunity for entertaining it, should disturb the country by the agitation for a measure of Reform. I do not, however, find fault with the Government for the proposal to enfranchise it, because I have great confidence in its future; but close to Middlesborough is an important and flourishing town, Stockton-on-Tees, with a population of 13,300. I would join the two, which would make an electoral population of 32,300. That is the way in which I would treat Middlesborough.

Will the House now allow me to call their attention to Dewsbury? I mention it because it is the only one of

those places—with the exception of Middlesborough, which did not exist—that I, as the organ of Lord Derby's Government, did not propose to enfranchise. I was perfectly well aware of its claims, but its population did not warrant such a proposal then. Even now (1861) it is only 18,100. There, again, you would not agitate the country for a measure of Parliamentary Reform to give a Member to Dewsbury; but you will find it is the centre of a cluster of towns, engaged in the same industrial pursuits, and distinguished by the same energy. I would take all these towns, the furthest of which is not, I believe, more than five or six miles from Dewsbury. They are almost conterminous—Batley, Cleckheaton, Heckmondwike, Merfield, and others, making in all a considerable population. That is what I call grouping. You would do more by such a system to improve the representation of the people than you can possibly do by those fantastic arrangements through which you are attacking ancient prescription.

Let us come then to Burnley. It is our old friend; it was introduced by us in the Bill of 1852; and every one has been trying to enfranchise Burnley ever since. Burnley had only about 20,000 inhabitants when Lord Russell commenced with it. It has now 28,700—no doubt a very respectable population, but nothing extraordinary. You have near it Cilne, with a population of 6,300, Padiham, 5,600; Accrington, 13,800; Todmorden, 11,800—37,500. Add these to Burnley, and you will have a population of 65,200. That is the way to group.

Take a fourth borough, one which we have all proposed to give a Member to. The population of Staleybridge has increased during the last seven years;

but the population of towns near it—which were of importance in 1859, but not of sufficient importance to justify us in dealing with them—has also increased. There are three towns intimately connected with Staleybridge—Glossop, with a population of 19,000; Hyde, with 13,700; and Dunkinfield, with 15,000, or with a united population of 47,700. If you join these towns to Staleybridge you will have a population of 72,700. I will say nothing about Hartlepool, because I believe that it is proposed to unite the two Hartlepools, and I am sure that such a constituency will send us good men. Then I would add Dartford to Gravesend, and, the population of the former being 5,300, and that of the latter 18,800, you would have a population of 24,100. By grouping in this way I think you would obtain a very considerable accession to the constituency; and I believe that if you dealt with the question in such a manner you would have the friendly co-operation of the old boroughs themselves.

Having touched on the question of grouping, and on the manner in which, if this Bill should be carried, additional Members are to be furnished, what I want to impress on the House at this moment is the important effect which dealing with the subject in this manner—if the Government would adopt it—would have on the vexed question of the county franchise, which I recommend to the earnest consideration of the House. Do not let us look on this Bill as a mere party measure, or as a Motion such as that of the hon. Member for Surrey, which may be carried or not this year, and for which, if it be carried or should fail, a remedy may be found next year. Let us feel that our legislation on this question of Parliamentary

Reform will affect the future of this country. Generations after us will feel the consequences of what we are doing at this moment; and, for my part, I should be sorry that when I have left the scene, my name should ever be recalled as that of one who supported a measure which injuriously affected the character of the Constitution of this country to which we are all so indebted.

On a former occasion, though I did not evade the other portions of the proposal of the Government, I touched particularly on the subject of the county constituencies, because I thought it had not been sufficiently treated. I asked the House to consider what the effect would be on our county constituencies of a great reduction of the franchise, when, at the same time, causes were in operation which were continually changing the distinctive character of those constituencies. Though I was ready, as I always have been ready, and am ready now, to treat this question in a large and liberal spirit, what I contended for—not in the interests of party, not in the interests of this side of the House, but in the interests of the country—was that you should maintain the distinctive character of the county constituencies. If that be true which was taught us by the great master of political science—it is wise that the energy and enterprise of cities should be tempered by the repose and steadfastness of the country—if that be true, it is the interest of every one in this House that we should, if possible, make the character of the county constituencies really what it assumes to be. Unquestionably one of the means by which the character of the county constituencies is perverted is this—that in the counties there are a great number of towns which have distinctive interests of their own, and which ought to be represented, but are not represented. There can

be no doubt that these towns very much change the character which otherwise would be peculiar to the constituencies of the counties; but if you were to group on the system which I have pointed out you might do much to get rid of that perversion of the character of the county constituencies.

There is another way of doing it which I placed before the House at great length on a former occasion, and which I will now merely allude to—that is, the revision of the boundaries of the Parliamentary boroughs. I was told at the time that when this Bill was brought forward we should find an arrangement which would meet objections of that kind. But I must say I have been entirely disappointed in that expectation. The argument of the Chancellor of the Exchequer on that head has been utterly unsatisfactory. I stated that the condition of the Parliamentary boundaries was the second great cause why the character of the county constituency is perverted. It is difficult to contend against that perversion, even with a high occupation franchise. But when you lower the franchise you aggravate all the sources of injury, and at the same time you offer no remedy whatever for the evils which exist. Now, what do I find? The Government repudiates altogether a general revision of the boundaries of Parliamentary boroughs. But it says, on the other hand, 'We have a scheme, and that is that the boundaries of Parliamentary and municipal boroughs should be identical.' [Sir GEORGE GREY was understood to express dissent.] I read in the Bill that the municipal and Parliamentary boundaries are to be identical. It is a slight matter, for, having gone through all the cases—I will not trouble the House with details, for I have taken up too much of

its time already—I find where the municipal and Parliamentary boundaries are different, the instances are so rare that they will not at all affect the main issue, nor will they remedy the grievance of which we complain. According to the rest of the scheme, you propose to call the extra municipal population into the circle of the Parliamentary borough, if that population desire it. But that they would desire it, that the extra municipal population would become Parliamentary, appears to me to be very doubtful, because the reason why people build their mills and their houses without the municipal boundary is that they should not be subject to municipal rates. As the desire of the extra municipal population is to be the moving point of the arrangement, I believe that very little will be done.

Now, these are the two heads under which the great evil of which we complain is aggravated. That great evil is that since the boundaries have been settled there has been an increase of 3,000,000 in the urban population, and from that population the county electors are to be qualified by this new Bill. There was an extraordinary argument used by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and I allude to it because it is another instance of the false analogy in which he indulges. The Chancellor of the Exchequer said, 'Take care how you revise the boundaries of Parliamentary boroughs. Take care not to press the matter too far. If we revise the boundaries of Birmingham and the great northern towns, we must revise the Parliamentary boundaries of other boroughs in England to which agricultural districts have been appended.' Sir, that is no answer whatever. What I say is this, 'Support the settlement made by the Reform Act.' The balance of influence that was settled by the Reform Act, is what we want

you to maintain. That settlement was not made in favour of the Conservative party. It was made by a Liberal Government—a Liberal Government supported by an immense Liberal majority, and therefore we have a right to conclude that very little favour was shown to us. We find that the boundaries for 1832 have in the large towns practically been entirely violated, and violated to the injury of the legitimate influence of the county population. And what is your answer? Where the population has not increased, because in that part of the country in which the agricultural boroughs are situated the population has not increased, in answer to us, who are seeking to maintain the settlement of 1832, and to save ourselves from the violation of our boundaries, you reply, 'Oh! we must examine the boundaries in the other parts of England where they have not been violated.'

Well, Sir, I have asked the House to consider those questions, which are particular points in the Bill we are asked to read a second time, and which refer principally to the borough franchise, but upon the right understanding of which the county franchise particularly depends. We are called upon greatly to reduce the county franchise. We complain that even as the franchise is now arranged there are certain evils which call for a remedy. There is a large mass of the population to whom we do not grudge the franchise, but to whom we say, 'Exercise it where your industry, capital, and interests are placed.' We complain that even with the present occupation franchise the legitimate influence of the counties is interfered with. You do nothing in this Bill, whether by the grouping of boroughs or the settlement of boundaries, to give us relief. You offer no remedy in any way for that most

anomalous grievance by which the freeholder of a borough votes not for the place in which his freehold is contained, but for a place with which he has no connection. In addition to this, you menace us with legions of town leaseholders. How are we to deal with a Government which meets us in such a spirit? How are we to meet them? If the Government came forward and said, 'This is a great occasion, and we are aware of the justice of your claims. In our judgment you may take an extreme view on this point, but we feel there is propriety in your requisition. At any rate you may depend upon our anxiety to meet in a legitimate manner the different wants and wishes of all classes in the community,' we might arrive at some settlement. But the position in which we have long been placed, and which is an unjust position, is now to be aggravated. You have additional sources of injury to turn against us.

Now let me remind the House of the circumstances under which these measures have been introduced to us. What I am about to say is known to every gentleman on this side, and I believe to the vast majority on the other. If, when Parliament met, a measure for the improvement of the representation of the people, temperate, well-digested, and tolerably fair, had been brought forward, it would have been my duty, with the entire advice and concurrence of all with whom I act, to have agreed to the second reading. No secret was made of that. It was unnecessary to intimate that. It was the course we have invariably pursued. In 1860, when Lord John Russell introduced his measure, that was the line of action which we followed. We immediately consented to the second reading, and that measure, though defeated, was not defeated by the Conservative party.

Lord John Russell himself admitted that. He has left it on record, and I shall repeat his words. In his own terse language he says—

> I was defeated by the Liberal party—and not only by the Liberal party, but by those Members of the Liberal party who represent great constituencies.

I was astonished to hear the Secretary of State impute to us that in 1860 we loaded the paper with Amendments. What more natural? Is it not always understood that you are to exert yourselves to the utmost to improve a measure of this kind and make it generally advantageous? Extraordinary charge! We had agreed to the second reading; and, singular proof of the hostility of the Opposition, we absolutely put Amendments on the paper. I say, then, that the strange delay as regards this measure is not to be attributed to us. It is difficult to know to whom it is to be attributed—I would not say it is difficult, but it is disagreeable. My object to-night is to touch upon things of another kind. I will not advert to the unfortunate conduct of the Government in the management of their Bills. A great deal of time has undoubtedly been lost; but to whomsoever the fault may be attributed this I will say, it is not want of time that will prevent this Bill being fairly considered, and, if a good measure, being passed. We can all of us make a great effort if time be the only thing wanting. We could sit in the morning and in the evening. We could cheerfully devote ourselves to a task which was necessary, which the country required, the object of which was clearly understood by its projectors. The House of Commons would soon make up for lost time. But, Sir, the cause of the Bill not advancing, the cause of the uncomfortable position in which the country, the

House of Commons, and the Government are placed with regard to this measure, is other than loss of time. I am sure I do not at this moment wish to say anything which could disturb the self-complacency of any individual in this House, but there are moments when one must be frank. When there is so much at stake—when there is so much at stake as the future of a great Empire, one must speak out; though so far from wishing to offend any one, I say that, to use an expression of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if I do offend any one, I apologise for it beforehand. But it is not time, it is not want of time, that prevents our legislating in the matter. It is something else—I say it sincerely, and I wish to speak temperately—it is the want of maturity, both in design and in preparation, which has attended the measures of the Government in this matter.

Now, Sir, permit me very briefly to prove that statement, for it is of importance when we are called upon to read a Bill of this magnitude for the second time after only a week's consideration. Talk of wasting time! At any rate, that was a course that was compensatory for such *laches*. When Parliament met we were promised information—papers upon the position of the borough franchise. They were not given to us for a considerable period. I wish to speak my own opinion sincerely with regard to those papers. I think them very valuable papers, and though they may have been, and unquestionably it was proved that they were, hurriedly prepared in some cases, I believe they were *bonâ fide*, and prepared with ability and sincerity. Well, Sir, those papers were placed before us; though the House will recollect the almost despairing expressions of the Secretary of State when we pressed him for those papers, which conveyed to the House little

prospect of their ever appearing, only a few days or hours before the introduction of the Bill, when wet from the press, and confessedly, I think, not read by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, they were placed upon the table. They were, as I say, very important papers, and I, for one, received them with that respect which was due to the source from which they originated. Let it be remembered, however, that not only were they hurriedly prepared, but that the principal patron of the Government, the highest authority on the subject, after having examined them, rose in his place and informed the House that they were utterly untrustworthy.

Well Sir, there is another branch of information which was required upon this important subject, and that was information respecting the condition of the county franchise. None was given to us, to the great disappointment and surprise of the House. But, although no information, no statistics, no papers respecting the county franchise were given, it would be unfair in me if I did not admit that we were amply and frankly informed of the views of Her Majesty's Government on that important subject, especially with reference to the point which is the origin of this legislation—namely, the position which the working classes occupy in the constituencies. The papers which the Government hurriedly placed before us with regard to the borough franchise produced a considerable sensation in the House, because they proved, and proved, I think, conclusively, that the working classes already possessed a considerable status in the borough franchise. But Her Majesty's Government, though they gave us no papers respecting the county franchise, did frankly and explicitly give us the result of their de-

liberations on that subject, because the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the chief organ of the Government in this House, and especially on this subject, informed us that in the county franchise the working classes were an infinitesimal quantity; and, in fact, that no papers were produced as to their position with regard to the county franchise, because, in their opinion, they possessed no share in that franchise. You remember the expression of the Chancellor of the Exchequer. I, in an unhappy moment, not wishing to give any offence, made an observation across the table — I will never make one again—and on account of that observation I was violently denounced by the right hon. Gentleman; in fact, I was frightened out of my wits. 'There may,' he said, 'be some few working men in your county who have votes; but in county constituencies the working man is as the fly in a pot of ointment.' Those were his words—I never shall forget his glance. Well, Sir, from that moment I have been engaged, with the assistance of some gentlemen who are practised in such matters, in endeavouring to obtain information upon this subject. It is entirely foreign to my habit ever to offer to the House any statistical information which, as a private Member, I may obtain. I think that in our debates, as a general rule, nothing is more salutary than that we should argue, and certainly that we should legislate, only from authentic and official statistics furnished by the Government. But there are cases, when the Government makes statements which you doubt—while they do not furnish you with information; when they decline to furnish you with information; when they scoff at you for asking for information — there are cases when you are thrown upon your own resources, and I should be grateful to

any man who had been long sitting in this House, and who had been not altogether unaccustomed to the management of such affairs, if, with the becoming modesty which such a situation would require, he offered—not for the adoption of the House, but for its consideration—such results as he may have arrived at. What, therefore, I am going to say I do not want the House to accept with any unreasoning credulity, but in that spirit in which I would accept them when in Parliamentary life I received such communications.

We have—I will not yet say completely—but thoroughly investigated the subject, and we have received communications from many parts of the kingdom. We received them from men in official positions who could give us authentic information, and I am bound to say we have received that information from Gentlemen of Liberal opinions as freely and as numerously as from Gentlemen of Conservative opinions. We have all of us only had one object, which was to arrive at the truth; and the result at which we have arrived is this—of course the details are in some instances imperfect, but in others they are very ample—the result is this, and I believe it will eventually be demonstrated if the Government, as I hope, will give orders for an official investigation into these matters—that the working men of England have a larger share of the county constituency than they have even of the borough constituency, and by which the Government were so startled.

I ask the House, then, is not this another evidence of the immaturity in which all these matters have been dealt with? Let me presume to say that in dealing with this portion of the subject—namely, the county franchise—a Government who really believed that the

working classes had no share whatever in the constituencies were scarcely justified in addressing the House in the manner in which we have been recently addressed, and told that if we did not pass these measures instantly Parliament should never be prorogued!

And now I pass to the third subject, on which I venture to say the same immaturity has been exemplified, and that is the subject of Parliamentary boundaries. It is quite clear that when the Bill was first brought forward in this House this subject was one which had hardly occurred to the Government, and had occurred to them only as one of comparative insignificance. It is no answer to me to say, 'You did not vigorously deal with it in 1859.' We did something, but the years that have succeeded 1859 have immensely aggravated the circumstances; and what the House has to decide is not upon the comparative negligence of one Ministry and another, but upon what ought to be done for the public good. I say, then, that the manner in which that subject has been treated, and now hurriedly dealt with by the Government, is a third proof of the immaturity of their proceedings in this matter.

Well, Sir, the fourth proof, I think, is the Bill before the House. If there be a subject which can most tax the depth and discretion of a Ministry, it is the distribution of Parliamentary seats, which is, in fact, the distribution of political power in this country; and I say that it was impossible to have produced a scheme upon the subject more troublesome, more vexatious, and which, at the same time, produced less satisfactory results. But are we to be surprised at such consequences? Is it not notorious that when the Franchise Bill was introduced the Minister who introduced it never even contemplated a Bill for the redistribution of

seats; and that this vast subject, which required so much thought, so much research, so much temper, at the same time such forbearance and such firmness, was never considered except in the few hasty days—or hours rather—which they snatched from other engrossing labours during the agitated fortnight between which it was promised and produced? Is this, or is it not, another proof of the immaturity with which all these measures have been prepared?

Well, Sir, I am told as I walk down to the House of Commons every day—by the man in the street walking down Parliament Street—*ibam fortè viâ sacra*—somebody tells me, 'I hope you are going to settle the question.' Sir, ignorance never settles a question. Questions must be settled by knowledge, and it is not the vexation of an opposition, from whichever side of the House it may come, that prevents this Bill from advancing. It is that we none of us see our way. I say it with a frankness that I trust will be pardoned, I do not believe the question of Parliamentary Reform is thoroughly understood by the country—is thoroughly understood by this House; and although I dare only utter it in a whisper, I do not believe that it is thoroughly understood by Her Majesty's Government. I remember often with pleasure a passage in Plato where the great sage descants upon what he calls 'double ignorance,' and that is where a man is ignorant that he is ignorant. But, Sir, in legislating there is another kind of double ignorance that is fatal. There is, in the first place, an ignorance of principles, and, in the second, an ignorance of facts. And that is our position in dealing with this important question. There is not a majority in this House that can decide upon the principles upon which we ought to legislate in regard to this

matter; there is not a man in this House who has at his command any reliable facts upon which he can decide those principles.

But then the question arises—What are we to do? I admit the difficulty. I do not shut my eyes to the position in which we are placed. The country, the House of Commons, the Ministry—although it may seem an idiomatic, it is a classical phrase, as it was used by Dean Swift—are in a scrape. I should despair of escaping from this perplexity and this predicament had I not an unlimited confidence in the good nature and the good sense of the House of Commons. We must help the Government. We must forget the last two months. The right hon. Gentleman must recross the Rubicon; we must rebuild his bridges, and supply him with vessels.* The right hon. Gentleman is in a position in which he can retire from this question of Reform for the moment with dignity to himself and to his colleagues. He must not sacrifice his country, his party, or his own great name to a feeling of pique. He is still supported by a majority; he is not in the position of a Minister whose reputation and the fortune of whose Cabinet are staked upon individual measures in a House wherein it is known that he is in a minority. That has been the unfortunate position of others, but it is not his. He occupies a far different position. In deference to what

* Mr. Gladstone had visited Liverpool during the Easter recess, and had announced, in a speech delivered in the Amphitheatre, the resolution of the Ministry to stake their existence on the adoption of the main provisions of their Reform Bill. Allusion is made above to the words in which he enforced this declaration—'We have passed the Rubicon; we have broken the bridge; and we have burnt the boats behind us.'

I believe to be the wish of the country and the desire of the House of Commons, what has he to do? It seems to me that the most advantageous and the most dignified course for him to adopt would be this—Let him at once give instructions that complete and accurate statistics shall be prepared with regard to the borough franchise—not hurriedly, but with time and with attention, and in an impartial manner, so that no person shall be able to rise and say that we are called upon to legislate upon this question upon facts which are utterly untrustworthy. Let him, recognising the unfortunate admissions which the Government made under the mistaken views which they adopted with reference to the county constituencies, give immediate orders that the most ample information should be acquired as to the share which the working classes of this country possess in the county franchise; let him direct that such information should be provided with care and discrimination. I think such enquiries may be trusted with safety and security to those persons who have provided us with the information we now have relating to boroughs, and which I believe to be imperfect merely on account of the hurried manner in which it was produced. Let the right hon. Gentleman, then, to-morrow, after consultation with his colleagues, give orders that sub-commissioners, acting under the Inclosure Commissioners, should visit all the Parliamentary boroughs of England and examine and report upon their boundaries. Let the right hon. Gentleman give up this scheme of grouping represented boroughs, which he must see is repudiated by both sides of the House; let him boldly acknowledge that the proper way of dealing with the subject is to appeal to the spirit of justice of the represented boroughs to spare him a few

Members from their superfluity; let him prepare a well-digested and complete scheme, which will give representation where required upon the principle of grouping the unrepresented towns of the country; and having done all these things, let him consider the results with his colleagues, and when Parliament meets again he will have the opportunity—for which I am willing to give him every credit—of submitting to our consideration a measure which will command the sympathies of the country, and which will obtain the sanction of Parliament.

JUNE 4, 1866.

On the Motion for going into Committee on the Government Representation of the People Bill, and Redistribution of Seats Bill.*

Captain Hayter moved as an amendment, 'That this House, while ready to consider the general subject of a Redistribution of Seats, is of opinion that the system of grouping proposed by Her Majesty's Government is neither convenient nor equitable, and that the scheme is otherwise not sufficiently matured to form the basis of a satisfactory measure.'

On the fourth night of the debate, LORD JOHN MANNERS, MR. ADDERLEY, LORD ROBERT MONTAGU, MR. WALROND, MR. MITFORD, SIR THOMAS BATESON, MR. WHITESIDE, MR. MARSH, and MR. ALGERNON EGERTON supported the amendment, which was opposed by EARL GROSVENOR, MR. BERNAL OSBORNE, MR. GRENFELL, MR. PIM, MR. HENRY SEYMOUR, MR. COLERIDGE and MR. GLADSTONE.

Mr. DISRAELI: Mr. Speaker, I quite agree with one sentence of the right hon. Gentleman's speech, that it is the duty of the two parties in this House to

* Mr. Gladstone proposed by this Bill to take away one member from all boroughs which returned two, having a population under 8,000; and to group such boroughs wherever they could 'be joined together with geographical convenience.' The 'group' consisting in some cases of two, in others of three, and in others of four boroughs.

If the 'group' had a less population than 15,000, it was to return only one member; while the more populous 'groups' were to have two representatives in Parliament.

Forty-nine seats would thus have to be redistributed: of these, twenty-six were to be assigned to English counties, sixteen to English boroughs, and seven to Scotland.

approach this subject in a spirit of conciliation and conscientiousness; and I was rather surprised, considering the general tone of the speech of the right hon. Gentleman and this voluntary expression of opinion on his part, we being prepared to meet him in that spirit, and prepared to meet him upon the merits of the case before us, that he should, according to his habit, assume that the peroration of a Parliamentary speech must necessarily consist in scolding one's opponents.

Why, Sir, the facts of the case are all against the right hon. Gentleman. Of what does he complain? He read us an extract from a speech delivered by Lord Derby, that was uttered at the commencement of the Session, and certainly, as I followed it, it appeared to me that we had exactly and severely and rigidly fulfilled the undertaking then given. For what did Lord Derby say? That we would give the measure of the Government fair play. Well, have we not consented to the second reading of the Bill? Have we interposed any cunning Resolution, as in 1859, for the purpose of defeating the measure by a side-wind? I admit, indeed, that in the course of those proceedings there have been two Motions which have arrested the progress of the Government measure. One of them was offered by the noble Lord the Member for Chester, and he received from the right hon. Gentleman opposite, in due course, the same invective to which we have just been exposed. The House and the country, however, sanctioned the wisdom and acknowledged the propriety of the course recommended by the noble Lord, and the right hon. Gentleman in twenty-four hours adopted it. What is there, therefore, to complain of, that we should have voted for a measure, the sagacity of which he and his Government have subsequently

recognised? Well, then, again with regard to the other Amendment which is now before us. This also has been proposed by an habitual supporter of the Government, and it might, perhaps, have given rise to great controversy had not the right hon. Gentleman opposite risen and expressed the sentiments that we have heard from him. The Motion might have been described as an adroit, an insidious, a sinister, and vexatious Amendment, aiming at that which ought not by any means to be proposed, and, if carried, damaging with great effect the proposition of the Ministry. But what has the right hon. Gentleman done in the main portion of the speech which he has addressed to the House? Why, he has acknowledged the justice of the Amendment, has thrown over the whole system of grouping—[The CHANCELLOR of the EXCHEQUER signified dissent]—as a scheme the difficulty of which all acknowledged to be one that it was impossible to deal with in Committee, and the right hon. Gentleman has frankly informed the House that no doubt upon reflection Her Majesty's Government do not deem the geographical system of grouping to be either an indispensable portion of the measure, or, on the whole, to be the most convenient solution of the difficulty. Yet these are the two factious Amendments that have been brought forward, and which have been denounced by the right hon. Gentleman opposite, and which, with one exception, are the only Amendments that have been offered to the consideration of this House.

There was one more, and that was the Instruction moved by my hon. Friend the Member for Northamptonshire (Sir Rainald Knightley). The right hon. Gentleman availed himself of his considerable command of epithets to attempt to describe the character of the Mo-

tion made by that hon. Gentleman; but, not satisfied with that, the right hon. Gentleman resorted to the language of Lord Derby—it seemed the right hon. Gentleman had his pockets full of extracts from that authority—he flaunted them before the House, and amid the enthusiastic and sympathetic cheers of the great Liberal party, seemed to make one of those palpable hits which are so popular in this House. Well, what did my hon. Friend the Member for Northamptonshire really do? He moved that clauses against bribery should be introduced into the new Reform Bill. Does the right hon. Gentleman, when he rises in the House and quotes the language of Lord Derby, and declares himself that there is no precedent for such a course—does he forget that the late Member for Norfolk made the very same proposal in the last Parliament; that the measure was accepted by Lord John Russell, then leader of the House, and the Instruction was inserted in his Reform Bill?

Now, Sir, so much for the Motions that have occurred in the House of Commons within the last three months in opposition to this Bill. Two of them have been virtually accepted by the Government, and the other, which was denounced as unprecedented, was accepted by Lord John Russell, on the occasion of the last Bill of the same character. Therefore, Sir, I think the right hon. Gentleman will probably, on reflection, feel that he pitched his note a little too high for the occasion. He must have been thinking of the great days of 1832, of which he has certainly read, if he did not witness them. He must have thought it was an occasion to menace a party with impending revolution, and, what has always a considerable effect in rhetoric, menacing the dangerous consequences of an indefinite policy, the

effects of which at that moment cannot be ascertained. I think I have shown that, far from there being any foundation for this charge of the right hon. Gentleman, the House of Commons throughout these three months have acted in a temperate and sagacious manner, and I think it would have been very well if other persons had imitated the House of Commons. Good sense and good temper have been shown in the wisdom of the course they have recommended, and which has been adopted by the Government.

And now, if the House will permit me, as the right hon. Gentleman adverted to some observations made by me in a former debate, I will say a few words, not to vindicate myself, which is of little moment, but because they lead me to a most important part of the question—the very pith of the question which has not yet been touched on, and respecting which the right hon. Gentleman showed, on the part of the Government, what I deem to be a misapprehension, that, if I am correct in my view, must be most injurious in its consequences if not remedied.

But first I will say one word about the small boroughs. I am not going at half-past twelve o'clock to vindicate them, but I will say this about small boroughs—it is impossible to argue the case of the utility of small boroughs by referring on either side to individual instances. It is a controversy that may last for ever. We are in the habit of referring to the eminent public men who have sat for small boroughs, and I mentioned several myself. I do not think my instances were bad instances; and, so far as regards the case of India, I beg to remind the House that two high authorities on India, Mr. Wilson and Mr. Massey, were returned for Westbury and Newport, two small

boroughs, while I believe there is a distinguished Indian Judge in the House of Commons at this moment who is Member for Liskeard (Sir Arthur Buller). The truth is, you cannot decide this question by instances drawn from an existing Parliament. You must take a wide range; and it is my opinion that, if you were to put an end to all these small boroughs, you will find landowners, merchants, and manufacturers coming in too great numbers into this House. I think there is a popular principle at the bottom of this system of small boroughs. There is even a democratic principle. I do not mean that it has anything to do with demagogues. They easily get into this House, but if only demagogues they seldom stay here. I do not mean these; but men who have carved out their own fortunes, who have shown that they are men of mark, do find their way into the House of Commons chiefly through these small boroughs. Then, says the right hon. Gentleman, 'The small borough you instance is not in our list, and is not, therefore, a small borough.' Well, perhaps it may have a population of 9,000; but what security have we that it will not be in the right hon. Gentleman's next list? Sir, there is a most important point connected with our borough system (I am not now speaking merely of the smaller boroughs) which ought not to be disturbed or changed before the House has given it their fullest consideration. The House knows well the statistical fact that 11,500,000 of the population of this country are represented here by 162 county Members. They know that 9,500,000 people living in boroughs are represented in this House by 334 Members—borough Members. Well, now, upon the first blush one would naturally say, 'How is it possible that such a system could have existed so

long and worked so well, founded upon such monstrous anomaly, on such injustice as that 11,500,000 of a free people should be only represented by 162 men, while 9,500,000 people, because they live in boroughs, are represented by 334 Members?' That is a great problem to solve. Now, we have always had a general understanding in the House that there was some indirect mode by which a just or, at least, an endurable arrangement in this House was brought about; that there was some counteracting influence by which the system of a majority of the population, represented by the minority of the Members, found some approximation to a fair adjustment. It has been acknowledged by Gentlemen on this side, it has been greatly exaggerated because it was unknown by Gentlemen on the other; but when the House of Commons is called on to disturb and to destroy a great portion of the borough representation, they are bound to consider what effect it will have upon the representation of those 11,500,000 people who live in the counties. Now, I admit that it is not a very easy task to ascertain with precision what is the number of the supplementary votes that constitute the fair representation that has made our system work, on the whole, so advantageously. You cannot take a pen and sheet of paper and ticket off the boroughs, and say, 'these represent the landed interest, and these the urban,' and so on. The considerations are complicated. It does not follow, for example, that because there is a small rural borough it is under landlord influence, or at all represents the landed interest. There are very small boroughs in the agricultural districts of a very independent character. There are some in which Dissenting interests predominate; and, next to the landowners, the result of my researches is, that

Dissenters and religious interests are predominant in the small boroughs. Again, you may take a borough with a large constituency, and superficially of an urban character, and yet upon fair analysis you may find that one of its Members is returned by territorial influence. Again, you may find a country gentleman, a large-acred man, who sits for a borough, but does not represent in his votes and sentiments the interests of what is called the land. Therefore, it requires considerable analysis to arrive at a precise result. I have endeavoured to perform this analysis, not as a partisan, or even as a politician, but as if I were preparing a paper for the Social Congress.

I will now state to the House—I may be mistaken in what I say, but, at all events, I have gone through the necessary research and trouble—the number of supplementary votes which the landed interest—that is to say, these 11,500,000 people who are not represented except by the 162 county Members—receive. It is eighty-four. Now, if you deduct eighty-four from 334, the number of borough Members, you will find 250 as the result. If you add these eighty-four to the 162 county Members, you will find the result to be 246, as against 250; and there you see the counteracting machinery by which our system has been permitted to work so advantageously. It is not a complete and perfect adjustment of the claims of the landed interest; but you cannot, in the arrangement of a large and ancient Constitution, expect too great nicety, but only a fair approximation to what may be called electoral justice.

Well, observe what will be found in the provisions and clauses of the present Bill. Of these eighty-four borough Members that are supplementary to the

fair representation of the counties and the county population, forty-two are disfranchised by the proposition of Her Majesty's Ministers. Well, that becomes a very serious consideration, and of course involves a very imperfect county representation. It is very true you give twenty-six new county Members, but you institute at the same time at least fourteen new borough seats, and therefore, where the adjustment was by no means perfect before, there is now a diminution to the number of at least thirty Members proposed by the Bill. Well, this is a very serious matter, because you must feel convinced that unless you establish something like approximation to justice in the representation of this House, according to the claims of the population and property of the country, the system cannot work. It has worked before by these supplementary means; but if you greatly impair or destroy these supplementary means, it is quite impossible you can go on very long with a representation so one-sided and imperfect.

But then the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when I talk of the landed interest, and when I suggest to the House the means by which a fairer representation of the landed interest may take place—necessary before, but doubly necessary since, the introduction of this Bill—denounced my plan as one by which the counties would be weeded and purged, and that I wished to reduce the counties to a mere assemblage of landlords and tenants. That has been said by Her Majesty's Government throughout these debates. It is not a new opinion on the part of the Ministry. The Secretary of State said the other day that the right hon. Member for Buckinghamshire, by enfranchising unrepresented towns, would eliminate every element of intelligence in the country. The Solicitor-General said that, by so doing,

the Member for Bucks wants county Members only to represent farmers and farm-labourers. The Lord Advocate said that the Member for Bucks wants to eliminate the urban element out of the counties, so as to leave them purely agricultural constituencies. The Attorney-General and the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster said the right hon. Member for Bucks—unfortunate Member for Bucks!—wants, contrary to the Constitution, to limit the county constituency to one class, and to eliminate the intelligence and independence of the counties. It is very important that we should have a distinct idea of the views of Her Majesty's Government, and the right hon. Gentleman entered into such details that there can be no doubt upon the subject. The Chancellor of the Exchequer observed that I wanted to enfranchise all unrepresented boroughs having a population above 5,000, and to eliminate thereby from the counties their intelligence and independence.

Now, let me state, in the first place, that there never was a man so silly, not even one of those Members whom the hon. Member for Westminster says are celebrated for their peculiar mental conformation, who would wish to give Members to all unrepresented towns, from Burnley with its 30,000 inhabitants to little Ware with its 5,000. No one can for a moment believe I proposed it. Still, for the sake of argument, I will assume that that was my policy, and that I am going to solve the difficulty as to the representation of the landed interest by this great scheme of enfranchising all unrepresented towns above 5,000 in population. We have a return on the table giving the names and population of the unrepresented towns in England with a population above 5,000, and it will be

found that their population amounts to a little more than 1,000,000; so that, if you deduct that number from the 11,500,000 of the county population, you will still leave for the county population half the English people. But I want to know what becomes of the surplus over the farmers and farm-labourers. We have returns on the table of the number of farmers and farm-labourers and members of their families, and of all the persons otherwise connected with the cultivation of the soil, arable, pasture, and woodland, and even of all those engaged in horticulture, the total amounting to 2,000,000, which if you deduct from 10,500,000 will leave 8,500,000 still unaccounted for. Now, what I complain of is that those Gentlemen who charge me with eliminating the people of England from the counties have, it appears, based their calculations so that they do not account for 8,500,000, and themselves thus eliminate 8,500,000 from the counties. Besides the unrepresented towns from Burnley to Ware, with a population above 5,000, there are 500 towns in England with a population under 5,000. But beyond all these there is a scattered, or, technically speaking, a village population in the counties of upwards of 9,000,000, as numerous as the whole population of the represented towns, while there are as many trades and manufactures in the counties as in the towns. There may not be for special industries those great aggregates of wealth and skill which you may find at Manchester and Leeds, though you may see even in the rural districts similar establishments scarcely less important than those in the great cities. You have, besides, many manufactures which are almost peculiar to the country districts. The silk manufacture prevails there almost to a greater extent than in the towns. Paper

is manufactured in the country. Leather is chiefly manufactured there. There is much mineral development in rural districts; all quarrying is carried on in the country. You have fifty branches of active industry peculiar to the country. You have a greater number of the professional classes residing in the country than in the towns. The counties contain more lawyers, more dissenting ministers, and as for the clergy, who, irrespective of their special calling, constitute as territorial proprietors one of the most powerful classes in the kingdom, it is in the counties they are most numerous, and it is only by the county Members that they are represented in this House. Yet we have, notwithstanding all this, a Government coming forward and contending that my plan is to represent the unrepresented towns by a process which will eliminate all the population from the counties except the farmers and farm-labourers, who amount to 2,000,000 out of 10,500,000. How, I would ask, can men with such views and information as I have shown settle with any propriety and success the county franchise?

But then the Chancellor of the Exchequer replies, 'It is all very well; you go off on your unrepresented towns, which may amount only to 1,000,000; but you forget the boundaries.' Well, all I have heard in this debate convinces me that, so far from being a waste of time, it has been extremely profitable, not merely to ordinary Members, but even to Ministers of State. All that I have heard on this question of boundaries has only confirmed me in my original impression that it is a part of the subject with which we ought to deal vigorously and efficiently, and that it is perfectly monstrous that one-half of the sheer town population of Halifax should be included in the county constituency.

I do not believe there is any difference of opinion in the Government or the country generally on this point, and I think that it is only the difficulty of the subject which prevents us from proceeding with it. But its very difficulty makes it only the more necessary that statesmen should deal with the subject efficiently. And suppose you were to deal with it efficiently, and also to represent those of the unrepresented towns which had due claims, you might reduce the population of the counties about 1,500,000. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, who was putting the case as much as he could against my view, and indulging in all the exaggeration of a rhetorical estimate, did not place it at more than 2,000,000. And what is the result? You still leave in the county population nearly 10,000,000 that is one-half of the English people. Adjust your boundaries, enfranchise your more important unrepresented towns, and you will still leave in the counties a population of 10,000,000 represented by only 162 Members. Is that a state of affairs which can last?

I maintain the moral to be that you must not meddle with your borough system unless you are prepared to deal with these vast matters. The landed interest, which hon. Gentlemen opposite persist in calling the agricultural interest—a phrase which I never used in the whole course of my life—the landed interest in the proper sense of the term—that is, the land with all its various products, all its accumulated capital, and all its classes—that interest with 10,000,000 of population, even after all these changes, will be represented by only 162 Members, plus the number which you are going to add by your Bill. That, I repeat, is a system which it is impossible can last. So far as the power of the landed interest is concerned, it would, no doubt,

profit by direct representation. Every interest profits by direct representation, which gives it more vigour and, in every sense, more power. But there are other considerations which must influence us besides that of absolutely conferring on the landed interest the amount and character of representation which they require, and among those considerations are the wish to avoid unnecessary change, and the great advantage of adhering to a system which is hallowed by tradition and prescription. These we now willingly acknowledge; but if you choose to destroy that system—if you choose to tamper with it, it is absolutely essential that you should offer some substitute and devise some means by which the landed interest should be adequately represented. And you cannot get off by these views expressed night after night, and week after week, by the Government describing the population of counties—after justice has been done by arranging boundaries and enfranchising some unrepresented towns—one-half of the English nation, as a mere collection of farmers and farm-labourers. Your own statistics—your own authentic records on the table confute the superficiality and error of such views and such statements. The thing must be met. And when the Chancellor of the Exchequer comes down and rises in his place and warns us that unless we adopt the measures of the Government we must take the consequences and may rue the consequences of our conduct, it is our duty to moderate his fervor, put our case before him, and ask him to deal with these facts and statements, the accuracy of which no one can dispute. And instead of hurrying on a piece of legislation which every one must feel, after such a statement as I have just made, to be entirely immature, wanting in every respect in prescience and preparation,

I think, instead of doing that, he ought to have availed himself of the friendly counsel of the noble Earl the Member for Chester, and have taken the earliest opportunity to reconsider and reconstruct his measure.

I see myself no objection whatever to the Amendment which has been moved by the hon. and gallant Member for Wells, and, so far as I could follow the speech of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Amendment is conceded. I understand that the Chancellor of the Exchequer does not for a moment insist upon the system of grouping which the universal opinion of the House and the general sentiment of the country have criticised and condemned. The noble Earl the Member for Chester has thought proper to express an opinion on the Bill of the Government. I am far from differing from him in that opinion. I, perhaps, should not have ventured to express it in so uncompromising a manner. An expression of that kind coming from me might be misinterpreted, but coming from the noble Lord it will, I should hope, break with the force of truth upon the conviction of the House and the conscience of the country. But what surprised me most was the reason which the noble Lord the Member for Chester urged for not at once terminating the course of a measure so pernicious, according to his account, as that proposed by the Government for the representation of the people. The noble Lord says it is the critical state of foreign affairs that influences him, and that he cannot take upon himself the responsibility of dislodging Lord Clarendon from the Foreign Office. Now, I very much regret that the name of Lord Clarendon has been introduced into this debate. Certainly, I should not have introduced it myself, and I should have been willing to limit my observations to the subject of our

borough representation and its influence upon our county representation, which is much more congenial to my mind at the present moment. But I cannot allow such an observation as he has made upon a public man of the importance of Lord Clarendon to pass unchallenged. The character of Lord Clarendon is brought forward by the noble Lord the Member for Chester as a reason why he should not oppose on every occasion, or on subsequent occasions, a Bill which he believes so improper, nay, so pernicious, as the measure introduced by Her Majesty's Government. Any man who occupies the position of Lord Clarendon, a Secretary of State invested with the management of our Foreign Affairs, no doubt often finds himself in very difficult positions. The difficulties of such a Minister may be dealt with in his closet, or he may experience them in Congresses and Conferences. The Minister of State who has to manage the Foreign Affairs of a country may find himself in the painful and difficult position of having, if possible, to prevent war. That is a great occasion, demanding a man's utmost energies and resources. Well, if he is the Minister of a country which is not prepared to go to war, I do not think he can be blamed if he fails to prevent war from taking place; but if he be the Minister of a first-rate country, of a country like England, which wishes to prevent war, and is prepared to act to prevent it, and then fails in that object, then I say he has shown a great want of resource and of those qualities which a man in his position ought to possess. That, certainly, was the position of Lord Clarendon during the Crimean War. He had the power of England at his back, yet he failed to prevent war. I think he might have succeeded in preventing it; his

whole course until war broke out was a scene of disaster.

Let us now look to the time Lord Clarendon was in Conference and Congress. [*Cries of* 'Question!' *and* 'Order!'] I say let us look at Lord Clarendon in Conference, because we have been told by one of the principal Members of this House, or at least one who has taken a leading part in the matter now before it, that his conduct is entirely influenced by his conviction that it is his duty to help to retain Lord Clarendon in power as the administrator of our foreign affairs. I say again, if in a Congress he is Minister of a country which is not prepared to enforce its decrees, it would be ungenerous to blame him if he fails in the object of his negotiations. But Lord Clarendon was the Minister of a triumphant and victorious country at a Congress, and what did he do there? Why, he favoured an arrangement with regard to the boundaries of the Turkish Empire so ignominious after our triumphant struggle, that it required all the energy and exertions of Lord Palmerston himself to prevent its being carried into execution. Lord Clarendon, the Minister of a triumphant country at a Congress, forfeited all the maritime rights of England. He consented at a Congress to enter into a conspiracy to put down the free press of Europe. At a Congress he deserted Circassia, which had every claim upon us. Circassia's case was introduced to the notice of this House by my noble Friend near me; she has ceased to exist as a nation in consequence of the conduct of Lord Clarendon at that Conference. Therefore, when the name of Lord Clarendon is brought forward as a reason why the noble Lord the Member for Chester is prepared to give his vote in favour of a measure which he denounces

as pernicious, I am apt to doubt the discretion of the noble Lord in that respect.

The right hon. Gentleman opposite ended his speech with a solemn protest against our conduct. It seemed to me that, as he went on, he could scarcely make good his ground, while he enforced with the fire of his eloquence charges against us which had no foundation. The right hon. Gentleman must feel that the reason that this measure has not advanced as he expected, and as he fondly hoped it would, originates in the essential character of the measure which he has introduced to Parliament. It was ill-advised, and it was ill-prepared, and when it was first introduced no one was more of that opinion, I believe, than the right hon. Gentleman himself. He spoke then with bated breath, and with downcast glance, but he has subsequently taken up the case and treated it with enthusiasm. Gerard Hamilton —'single speech Hamilton'—once a Member of this House, speaking of Mr. Burke, who was then his private secretary, said—

> Whenever he took up an opinion, whatever might be the circumstances, or the cause that he adopted it, he had so ductile an imagination that before he had talked long about it he fervently believed it.

Well, the right hon. Gentleman will not be offended with me if I compare him, at least in that respect, with Mr. Burke. The right hon. Gentleman, however, has also sometimes the advantage of a facility of forgetfulness. I do hope that the good sense of the House of Commons will allow this question to be adjourned till next Session, in order that Her Majesty's Government may make themselves masters of the question before it comes forward again; that they will not believe that the landed interest, when the unrepresented towns are

enfranchised, and the boundaries are arranged, consist only of farmers and farm-labourers; and that they will recollect that they will have to deal even then with half the people of England, so that they will be prepared to come forward on a subsequent occasion with a measure which will be more adequate to the occasion, and more calculated to give content and satisfaction to the people of this country.

JUNE 7, 1866.

In committee on the Government Representation of the People Bill, and Redistribution of Seats Bill.

MR. WALPOLE moved an amendment to clause 4, raising the occupation franchise in counties from 14*l.*, as proposed, to 20*l.*

MR. HUNT, MR. BERESFORD HOPE, MR. LIDDELL, and MR. ADDERLEY supported the amendment, and MR. C. VILLIERS, SIR EDWARD BULLER, SIR FRANCIS CROSSLEY, MR. PEASE, and SIR GEORGE GREY opposed it.

Mr. DISRAELI: It is not desirable that so very important a question as this should be decided by chance expressions made by Gentlemen on either side of the House. Our business is to do that which is best for the country, and not to engage in personal controversies about comparatively small points. With regard to what I have heard from the Secretary of State, I may remark that it is really no answer to my right hon. Friend the Member for the University of Cambridge to throw at his head Lord Derby's Reform Bill. He was not answerable for that. Again, on the other hand, it is no answer to us to throw at our heads the views and opinions of my right hon. Friend the Member for the University of Cambridge. We are not answerable for them. But the Secretary of State has endeavoured to answer the great body of Gentlemen on this side of the House by quoting the views of my right hon. Friend the Member for the University of Cambridge, and confuting those views by quoting against

him the provisions of Lord Derby's Bill. It must have been obvious that the ingenious remarks of the Secretary of State really had nothing whatever to do with this question. And although I am perfectly willing, if the subject were interesting to the House, to vindicate the policy and provisions of the Bill which I brought forward in Lord Derby's Government, what we now have to do is to decide on the policy best suited to the wants and exigencies of the present time. We have to decide what is necessary now, and we ought not to enter into all these recriminations. There were unsuccessful Reform Bills before that of Lord Derby, and we might as well bring forward them and show that the propositions of the present measure are not perfectly consistent with those Bills. But this I will say, that the proposition made on the part of the Government of Lord Derby with regard to the county franchise was not made on the sole condition which has been referred to in this discussion—namely, that the freeholders in boroughs should vote for the borough in which their property qualification was situated. The House was told over and over again that the propositions we made must be taken as a whole and as one; and avowedly the chief condition of our proposing that the qualification for the counties should be 10*l.* was that there should be no lower franchise for the boroughs. Whether our view was right or wrong, that was distinctly stated, and it was understood that if the question of the county franchise were entered into, it must be entered into with reference to the other qualifications.

But I must refer to the actual Bill before us. What we want, or at least what I want—and I believe I express on this point the views of all sensible men in the House—is a *bonâ fide* franchise for counties. The

moment we say that those who live in a county should exercise the franchise with regard to their property and interests in that county, and should not be interfered with by persons who have no interest in the county, but who possess qualifications for exercising votes for other places—the moment we say this we are told that we want to expel from the counties the whole of their urban character and to confine the county constituencies to farmers and labourers. There is no ground for these absurd and monstrous accusations of the Government. The Secretary of State has to-night repeated the charge. The Secretary of State said something about a proposal having been made to give a Member to every town that has 5,000 inhabitants. Why, no human being ever made such a proposition. But what I want to impress upon the Committee is this, that before they settle what is the proper franchise for counties they should clearly understand what the counties mean; because it is quite clear to me, not only from the speeches that we have heard during the last three months from the Treasury Bench, but from the speech which has just been delivered by the Secretary of State, that the Government have not an idea at this moment what the population of the counties is. For I must remind the Committee that if you entirely throw out all the unrepresented towns with a population not less than 5,000, to which the Secretary of State has just been referring, you still have left in the counties 500 other unrepresented towns with a population under 5,000; and irrespective of those last 500 towns, you have in the counties a scattered, or, as it is styled in the scientific language of statistics, a village population which is equal in amount to the whole of the population of all the now represented towns. We hear a

great deal of the immense population of the great cities of Manchester, Leeds, Birmingham, Sheffield, and other places; but it should be borne in mind that the population of all those great cities, and of all the represented towns together, does not exceed the village population of England; that is, the population irrespective of the unrepresented towns with 5,000 inhabitants, and the 500 other towns having less than 5,000 inhabitants.

What, therefore, more absurd than those statements by the Secretary of State to which we have just listened, that if any arrangement such as he intimated about restricting the exercise of the franchise by freeholders in towns, and other points of that kind, which are, comparatively speaking, small matters, were adopted, we should really have a county constituency consisting almost solely of an agricultural population, without any urban element whatever in it? It is not the fact. Those who attempt to settle this question with general notions of that kind are acting perfectly in the dark, and are attempting to arrange matters with which it is quite impossible that they can cope satisfactorily, because they are not sufficiently acquainted with the circumstances with which they are presuming to deal.

Well, Sir, I contend that in dealing with the population of counties you have, first of all, to obtain a tolerably accurate idea of what the general character of that county population is; and I say that, that being the case, you will find that half the population of the nation is in the counties of England, and that moiety of the population ought surely to be secured a fair and legitimate enjoyment of the franchise if you invest them with that great privilege. We go

on night after night, and are told that we are the representatives of farmers and farm-labourers. Grave—very grave—Secretaries of State tell us this.* But what is the fact? I will give my own instance—for perhaps in Committee one may report so familiar a matter as one's own experience. I have the honour of being the representative of a constituency which can be fairly described as a completely rural constituency, because in the county of Buckingham every town is represented. Well, now, what are the facts of the case? Why, in a constituency exceeding 6,000 the number of voters on the register under the 50*l.* qualification are only 1,200—that is to say, they are only a fifth in a perfectly rural constituency. Who are the other four-fifths? The freeholders. And where do these freeholders live? Why, they constitute a part of this great village population and of those small towns with a population under 5,000, which are never even taken into consideration by the right hon. Gentleman opposite. They are scattered among what composes half the English nation, and we are certainly not unreasonable in asking for the population of the counties, that if they are invested with the franchise they shall have the privilege of exercising that franchise in defence of their own property, their own industry, and their own interests, and that they shall not be interfered with by comparative strangers who have no sympathy with that property and that industry. That is a point, I say, upon which we ought to have a most distinct understanding, and it is no answer to tell us that in Lord Derby's Bill this was not done, or was done very imperfectly. What we have to do now is, that we shall settle the question completely and satisfactorily.

* A reference, it would appear, to Mr. Secretary Cardwell.

The question of the boundaries of towns ought to be fairly and completely settled by any Ministry that attempts to conclude this question. Sir, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, night after night, has made admissions of the justice of our claims; but he couples those admissions with an elaborate description of the difficulty of satisfying them. But that, Sir, is no answer. No doubt it is difficult; but it is one of those questions which a Government that presumes to deal with a question of this important character—namely, the distribution of political power in the State—ought to and must encounter. We have a right to expect that the question of boundaries shall be completely and satisfactorily settled.

Well, then, I may be told that the Government of Lord Derby did not at all encounter in as large a spirit as they might have done the question of the unrepresented towns. But, then, it is some years since the Government of Lord Derby existed. Hon. Gentlemen must not forget that the Census of 1861 has been since taken, and that we know a great deal more than we did before of the condition of the country—we know much more about the amount of population, and the manner in which that population is employed, than we did or could know in the years 1858 and 1859. And are we not to profit by that increased information which we have now at our disposal? We know that there are a number of very considerable towns which have sprung up in England—towns with a much larger population than is given in the Census of 1861—and therefore it is absolutely necessary at a moment like the present, when we are attempting to settle the amount and character of the county franchise, we should have a clear conception how, generally speaking, political

power is to be distributed in this country. The Government, I admit, when they brought forward their Bill for the Redistribution of Seats, did offer to the House a clear and distinct programme of the mode in which they thought the claims of the counties in that respect ought to be met. It was most unsatisfactory—nothing could be more unsatisfactory—still it was clear and definite. But the Government, night after night, have given up every part of that programme, and, if I could infer anything clearly from the speech of the Secretary of State in the matter, the whole affair is now *in nubibus*. There is not a question respecting the direct representation of large bodies of the people not now represented that is not completely unsettled and thrown upon the table for discussion. We have no plan on the part of the Government to guide us; we have no means by which we can arrive in the least degree at what the views of the Government are; and, until we have some idea of that, I confess myself totally incapable of entering into the question as to whether the franchise for counties should be 50*l.* or 30*l.*, or 14*l.* or 10*l.* I am perfectly ready to support a 10*l.* qualification for counties, if it is a *bonâ fide* qualification. If the inhabitants of the counties, whatever may be their pursuits and calling—if that moiety of the English nation which is described by the Secretary of State as a collection of farmers and farm-labourers—if that moiety of the English nation are to be permitted to enjoy their franchises without interference from strange elements, and from bodies which really have distinct interests of their own, often directly represented in these towns—if all that were fairly arranged I should be the last person in the world who would shrink from a large and liberal settlement of the question. But if the bounda-

ries of the represented towns are not in any way to be settled, if the great industrial communities which have arisen in this country since the last Reform Bill are not to be directly represented in this House, you may decide upon a county franchise—I do not care whether it is 10*l.* or 14*l.*, or 20*l.*—which may end in giving a representation of that half of the English nation which will not be a fair and just representation of its property, its feelings, its industry or its interests—for that is the question before us; and I think the speech of the Secretary of State was a very strong argument in favour of the Amendment which my noble Friend the Member for King's Lynn moved this evening.

I think that it is utterly impossible to deal with this question, except in a factious, hurried way, until we know what the Government are going to do, particularly with regard to the question of boundaries. I say it is impossible to deal with it except in a factious and hurried way, unless some plan is before us. ['Oh, oh!'] Hon. Gentlemen opposite may sneer at these observations, but those who sneer will find out in a year's time that they are perfectly true. I maintain that you cannot satisfactorily settle the amount of the county franchise until you know what the Government are going to do with the large unrepresented towns. So far as the speech of the Secretary of State goes we have a right to assume that the Government are going to do nothing. We have no proposition before us. The only allusion made to this subject by the Secretary of State is absolutely absurd. He has assumed that persons in this House wish to enfranchise every unrepresented town that has a population of 5,000. I never heard of such a proposal; on the contrary, there are many towns with 5,000 inhabitants and more that have naturally grown

up out of the industry and the interests of the counties in which they are placed, and they are naturally and properly represented by county Members. But there are large towns and considerable communities which, as I believe, ought to have distinct representation, and, if they have not, they necessarily prevent a legitimate representation of the county populations. There are places, for instance, with flourishing manufactures; and what we object to is that, in addition to these prosperous manufactures, they should be also manufactories of county votes. That is what we object to, and we wish to see the counties fairly represented. The population of the counties does not, as has been assumed, consist merely of farmers and farm-labourers. I showed recently that the farmers and farm-labourers numbered about 2,000,000; and if you leave out of the account the unrepresented towns with 5,000 population and the 500 small towns under 5,000, you still have in the counties a population equal to that of all the great represented towns. I say that, under these circumstances, the county constituencies have a right to have the franchise with which they are invested for the defence of their own property and their own industry free from such interference as I have already noticed. Half a northern town, as much connected with the other moiety as Westminster is with London, when the day for electing a Knight of the Shire arrives, can march into the county and vote for the Members for the county, although in every possible point of view—in the investment of their capital, in their industry, in their political opinions, and in their municipal sentiments—they are entirely in accordance with the rest of the town, which itself has the privilege of sending Members to Parliament. In many cases a borough is

directly represented here by two Members, and yet half of its population, because it is not within the Parliamentary borough, will ask for the power of influencing at the same time the return of county Members. That is unjust; that is not political justice; and, not being so, it must end in political disaster. That is all we say. If the Government would come forward with a distinct proposal to secure to the population of the counties the fair exercise of their suffrage, I have no doubt that any proposition which they made for reducing the franchise would be listened to with the utmost consideration, but they have made no effort of this kind. If under existing circumstances you reduce the franchise in counties, leave unrepresented all these large towns, with distinctive interests of their own which ought to be represented, and do not in a complete manner deal with the Parliamentary boundaries of represented towns, whatever figure you may fix upon for the county franchise the change will end only in disappointment and disaster.

On the 18th of June Lord Dunkellin moved an amendment to the 5th clause of the Reform Bill, the effect of which was to substitute 'rateable value' for 'clear yearly value' as the basis for the borough franchise. This amendment was opposed by the Government, who were defeated by a majority of 11, in a House of 619.

In consequence of this vote Lord Russell resigned office, and Lord Derby received the Queen's commands to form a Ministry, and, for the third time, entrusted the office of Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Leadership of the House of Commons to Mr. Disraeli.

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